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# EUROPE LOOKS AT SINCLAIR LEWIS

*by Harry Lorin Binsse*
*and John J. Trounstine*

"A JUST judge of the United States," said one of Sweden's principal dailies, *Stockholms Tidningen*, in headline type in November, 1930, referring to Sinclair Lewis, the day after the Swedish Academy had awarded him the Nobel Prize for literature. In the same paper, Prince William of Sweden, whose literary judgment has much influence in his own country, said of Lewis, "he has pictured the average American in an altogether splendid manner". The European press in general has thoroughly approved the award, not only because of the author's literary achievement, but because he has explained America to Europe. He is, admitted the critics in chorus, a satirist, who perhaps exaggerates his characters, but who bases them all firmly upon reality; Lewis, they said with unanimous emphasis, is a great realist as well as a satirist. He has judged his materialistic native country and found it wanting.

In centuries gone by, when people travelled less for pleasure, when a visit to the ruins of Indo-China or the desert fastnesses of Arabia was not an accepted part of a world cruise in a palatial ocean liner, and when, indeed, only a few foolhardy adventurers had ever taken world cruises, there was a pleasing conspiracy among travellers to substantiate all the amusing and incredible stories told by their predecessors. Mandeville is the *locus classicus* for such tales—one-eyed monsters, one-legged people who hopped about their business and used their single feet as parasols, men with green hair, men with no hair. It made very little difference what the inhabitants of the Antipodes were like, so long as they were different from the rest of us. And the traveller's tale was sacred; you believed in it because it was a good story—and because it made your superiority to the Antipodean absolutely certain. From the days of Homer up to the eighteenth century the convention held. Less than two hundred years ago the Jesuit, Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix, in his history and description of New France, records



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the existence of races of one-eyed and one-legged natives, although—foreshadowing a proper modern incredulity—he explicitly says that he has never seen such creatures himself.

All these cyclopean tales were doubtless the product of some natural kink in man's imagination; otherwise they would never have survived so long. And although the rigor of modern science has driven them out of popular belief and left them in the sad position of being mere historical curiosities, the psychological forces which produced them in the fifteenth century are as surely at work today as they ever have been. Everybody likes to read about the five-legged calf born in Winsted, Connecticut, especially if its existence is vouched for in the staid reliability of one's morning newspaper. Indeed it is this element of incredibility-made-credible which lies at the very heart of the old canine definition of news. We all love to be told fairy stories, so long as we can believe them. The extraordinary popular success of the indefatigable Mr. Believe-it-or-not Ripley vouches for the continuance of this trait in human nature.

When, in 1920, Sinclair Lewis published *Main Street*, America had a new and supremely able teller of traveller's tales. It was all so inherently credible—and so discreditable in the bargain. Everyone hailed the author as a realist. "There is no denying", wrote Stuart Sherman, at the time, "the vigor or the representativeness of the types presented in *Main Street*." There were unfortunately very few people out of our hundred millions, especially few readers of novels, who had ever been in Gopher Prairie. But James Branch Cabell has neatly summed up our later disillusionment: "He . . . told us, with a mendacity which time and his later books have coöperated to expose, that Gopher Prairie was a small town in Minnesota. We all know now that Gopher Prairie—like Zenith and Monarch and Sparta and Banjo Crossing, and like every other place that Mr. Lewis has written about since 1920—is a portion of the grotesque goblin land of Winnemac".

This is not to suggest for an instant that Mr. Lewis was insincere or that he lacked serious purpose in his writing. He is a man occupied with a genuine problem, a problem to which there seems to be no satisfactory solution, the problem of man's relation to the ethos of his tribe; "whether or not it is better to do that which seems expected", as Mr. Cabell puts it; the tragedy of "a man trying to maintain himself as the image of God under the pressure of dynamos in a world of high-pressure salesmanship", as Mr. Lewis himself expressed it in his recent vigorous speech of acceptance before the Swedish Academy. Yet Mr. Lewis's own statement of this problem betrays at once the fact that he is no realist. For if he were, he would see that there is no need to suppose this problem peculiarly modern, or an outgrowth of the machine age. People were trying to solve this question long before they were aware of electricity, and a true realist would have known that, almost from instinct.

Mr. Lewis is indeed no realist. He is "too opulently gifted to have to plagiarize his manly men and his womanly women from the life about him". George F. Babbitt, Elmer Gantry, Sam Dodsworth, never wholly existed. They are too typical, too clear-cut. Neither they nor Bill Sykes nor Pantagruel nor Tartuffe nor the Aristophanic Socrates ever wholly existed. It is their glory that they so perfectly symbolize some pattern of existence that it would be intellectually much easier for all of us if they had existed. To quote Mr. Cabell again, "If you can believe in the 'realism' of Sinclair Lewis it will give you a great deal more of comfort than does any other 'realism' ".

All this by now must be apparent to American admirers of Mr. Lewis's work. But it is not, and never has been apparent in Europe. *Main Street* came to the European as balm from heaven for his sore wounds. He saw,

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or thought he saw, an all-powerful United States threatening him from across the ocean with wealth, power, and prestige. Here was a country which a hundred years before had amounted to nothing, which for the last fifty years had been merely an incredible land of gold, opportunity, redskins and cowboys, now suddenly able to do things that Europe could not dream of doing—skyscrapers, motor-cars for everyone, shiny bath-tubs, speed, endless wealth. Here, for the first time in centuries, was serious competition for Europe as a whole the world over. And to make the situation worse, Europe owed us money.

The natural result was twofold. If America is great, let us go and be like her. Let us study her and discover how she has done it. But even if she is great materially, we are sure that she must be proportionately poor spiritually. The first result led to a rabid study of everything American, especially in central and eastern Europe, Henry Ford became a hero far more than he has ever been in this country. His biography, everything about him, has been read all over Europe with avidity. The principles of mass production were, and are, studied with a zeal unknown in this country. They have given a new word, "taylorization", almost unknown in America, to the European vocabulary of popular economics. The second result led to the intellectual and spiritual disparagement of everything American, and has likewise continued down to the present day. With wearying monotony the continental and British press emphasizes our bad manners, our crudeness, our lack of culture. Gunmen in Chicago and the vulgar influence of American movies are given constant attention. Moreover in England everyone seems to suppose that Americans speak a peculiar, unpleasant, nasal dialect which no true Britisher can ever understand without extreme effort. Any well-educated American who does not speak through his nose and who is not in the habit of saying "I reckon" will be asked almost daily in England where he learned to speak English so well, as though he naturally must have *learned* somewhere outside the States!

## II

To Europe in this psychological condition the works of Sinclair Lewis were indeed a blessing. Here was a chance to discover at first hand what America was like, and to discover also, what Europeans had suspected all along, that Americans are perfectly horrid people, soulless, "taylorized", mechanized, and unmoved by the higher things of life. It is our social critics, Upton Sinclair, H. L. Mencken and Sinclair Lewis, whose works are best known in Europe and, to ordinary, literate Frenchmen or Germans or Scandinavians they are the only important figures of contemporary American literature.

As early as 1922 M. Bernard Faÿ, that irrepressible Franco-American master of generalization, contributed an article on Sinclair Lewis to a magazine called *La Vie des peuples*. He characteristically entitled his study *Le Middle West et la formation de l'âme americaine*. His thesis was that the idealistic Wilson represented a moribund east and the politician Harding a completely democratic middle west, provincial, materialistic, but kindly, from which a new culture would spring. And Sinclair Lewis had supplied the best picture of this strange land in *Main Street*, which all Frenchmen should study.

The year before, *Main Street* had had a great success in England. The reviews were a trifle more balanced than those on the Continent were to be when the book achieved translation, but even the London reviews had about them a certain urbane superciliousness directed not at Sinclair Lewis—he was almost universally praised—but at Gopher Prairie. "We could produce such small-town sets here," said the *Observer*, "but we have, perhaps, rather less—call it vivacity—in commenting on the stranger and in asserting our own excellence." In other

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words, our English provinces are not *quite* so provincial.

*Babbitt,* coming two years later, confirmed Lewis's European reputation. "Babbitt has become a permanent concept, like Tartuffe, Tartarin, Chuzzlewit," says a German critic today in the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt.* As much has been said in this country. But to the average European, what does Babbitt signify? The answer is perhaps representatively expressed in the recent comment on Lewis written for that sprightly journal of Paris literary and political gossip, *Candide,* by André Levinson:

> This hero of mediocrity, this standardized man, become a mere automaton . . . had as great a success in France as everywhere else. His name is a symbol of the average American —100%. Babbitt is a "character" in the sense which Labruyère gave the word. His story is a manual for the study of a whole society. Mr. Lewis shows the vacuity, the triviality, the flatness of middle-class life in America. He puts to shame the agitated sterility of dollar chasing.

Babbitt is, to contemporary Europeans, the symbol of America, the typical American, one unit in a conglomerate Uncle Shylock. He is the obstreperous drunken tourist for whom the *Folies Bergères* and the spicy postcards exist; he is the ignoramus who asks silly questions and exists to have his leg pulled—or be cheated. He is the barbarian who insists upon beefsteak and ham and eggs in a Paris restaurant. He is everything unpleasant and American. And if Babbitt is foolish enough to try to absorb a little European culture, he is sneered at for his pains. The following is a typical excerpt, from the writing of a prominent, popular Italian critic, Carlo Linati, in the *Nuova Antologia,* perhaps the most distinguished Italian literary journal:

> But if Babbitt is right, and history is bunk and art senseless, why do American millionaires come with their dollars to seize the masterpieces of our painting? Why are they so anxious to hear our poets, our musicians, so anxious to adopt and propagate our scientific discoveries, and the words of our philosophers? Is it not that they themselves, in spite of all their materialism, feel that they cannot live without an appearance of culture, even when it is borrowed?

Sinclair Lewis had thus supplied Europe with the type it needed for expressing its dislike of America. His reputation was made, and as novel followed novel, each of his amazing characters was added to fill out the American myth. *Die Literarische Welt,* one of Germany's better known critical papers, published this appreciation of Lewis after the announcement of the Nobel Prize:

> Sinclair Lewis is an American, keen, sophisticated, ironic, mature; the first American to survey all problems, the woman question, the universities, prohibition, the World War. He is an observer of the many-faceted American existence, whose colorfulness has been brought home to us for the first time from his pen. Through Sinclair Lewis, and almost solely through him, we, and the jury who awarded him the Nobel Prize, have understood that our concept of America was extremely indistinct. What American author has until now made it possible for us to follow comprehensively the life of an Arrowsmith with all its Americanisms? The existence of an American physician is as distant as the poles from that of a European physician. We have now grasped this.

Such an amazing statement, however, is temperate when compared to the more jubilant attitude of a critic who had not the serious task of appraising the work of a Nobel Prize winner. Perhaps the most biting commentary on Lewis's work appeared about a year ago in *Etudes,* a Paris fortnightly, under the signature of Joseph Mainsard. He begins with the following piece of delicate irony:

> If one is to believe the official pronouncements of the United States, no country has ever more submissively followed Emerson's advice: "Hitch your wagon to a star!" In no part of the world has idealism, in all its forms, been

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more emphatically praised, and it would be a great consolation to more corrupt peoples to think that virtue, driven from their soil, had been able to find, overseas, so comfortable a resting-place. Unfortunately Mr. Sinclair Lewis has destroyed this rosy illusion. His works form an encyclopedic compendium of American life; each book studies it in a new aspect and destroys some portion of our dreams.

M. Mainsard goes on to analyze America in terms of Babbitt, Gantry, Arrowsmith. At the end one sees only a horrible, endless waste of machine-made houses, machine-made men, and machine-made life.

One cannot help wondering whether the Swedish Academy did not very largely base its award on the service Lewis is supposed to have rendered Europe in making America better understood, in giving Europeans a better chance to cite chapter and verse for their sneering at our culture. "Did the Swedish Academy wish to annoy America by crowning the thorn in her side?" asks one French critic. Of course that supposition, taken literally, is untenable. There were certainly purely literary reasons for awarding the prize to Sinclair Lewis, but not above any one living. Why was he chosen? Of all living American authors he is the most read and best known in Europe. Already his dozen books have been translated into Swedish, French, Polish, German, and Russian. Most of them have appeared in other languages also. The reasons for this tremendous popularity have been indicated. Surely the Swedish Academy was not unmoved by what Europeans think of the author it chose to honor. And thus, accoutred with the world's most highly publicized literary award, the Lewisian interpretation of America, the traveller's tales and "wonders of the invisible world" in his novels will probably continue for some time to represent our civilization to Europe.

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# THE PARADOX OF MODERNISM

*by Sherlock Bronson Gass*

WHY has modernism, in its heart of hearts, repudiated evolution? Vague as the term "modernism" is, destined ultimately to cover whatever changes may come over men's thinking, it is understood at the moment to imply ways of thinking brought about by the evolutionary hypothesis. Why, then, should it have turned upon evolution so cold a shoulder?

I ask the question soberly and critically. Modernism is not a mere contrast to fundamentalism, but a gathering system of positive doctrine. It is earnest enough to make flippancy impertinent. And it has proved its sincerity by flouting happiness, as Mr. Walter Lippmann has testified, and as a glance at the modernistic world—art and science, life and letters—amply confirms. It is altogether worth a critical examination, especially from a level near enough its own to be tinged with a little jealousy in behalf of the evolutionary premisses from which it has sprung.

## I

Three generations have come in now since the mine of evolution was sprung under the Western world. The initial shock of it for those whom it took by surprise in mid-career must have been bitter to the spirit and racking to the reason. For it seemed at once to subvert both the old aspirations of their hearts and the long-established premisses of their reason. The heart is a born conservative, but its disappointments are healed by new objects of affection. Reason is a born radical, but it is a structure built on old premisses. Which was affected the more deeply would be hard to say.

The theme was a prolific one for the fiction of the times. More recently Sir Edmund Gosse has outdone the novelists in his memorable record of the conflict as it came home to the rising generation, and to those whom it caught dyed in the wool of the old dispensation. The first impression left by this tale of tragic cleavage is of the amazing rapidity, as such things go, with which the revolution triumphed. So prompt and compelling was that triumph that to us who have come on since, born in an atmosphere of evolutionary acceptances and disciplined to a frame of references altogether evolutionary, it is virtually impossible to think in any other ways.

All this is still, to be sure, an affair of the intellectual world, or at most the "educated" world, as the recent show of strength on the part of the fundamentalists has revealed. But the whole question belongs to that world in the first instance. And I refer to the fundamentalists in their strength because the perception that it is the intellectual world that has been won to the hypothesis makes it pertinent to ask whether, in the broad distinction between the heart and the head, between affection and intellect, the affections have been won over anywhere



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along the line. Sir Edmund, in whom the victory seemed at first sight so complete, turned away to literature, and there followed a career virtually untouched by the ideas which had won his intellectual assent. His affections were elsewhere. He was the last literary scholar of the old school.

One swallow does not make a summer, it is true. And it is also true that evolution gave a new stimulus to the life of science, brought unprecedented numbers into scientific pursuits, and lent them an amazing ardor. This ardor, however, is not quite to the point. It is the ardor of the professions—of the business man for affairs, of the jurist for the law, of the priest for the hierarchy. It is not incompatible with the broader fervor of a common humanity, and when they are joined both may be lifted to high and significant levels. But it is separable in conception—and, alas, separable in practice, as every hardened economic, legal, or ecclesiastical system will witness.

It is to the world at large in its common humanity that the question comes home. Has the modern world, specifically the modernistic world, come genuinely to rejoice in evolution? Has it found there the clue to a moving, inspiriting, zestful philosophy? We have abandoned belief for reason. What we ask, whether of a faith or of a philosophy, is a sense of our place in the scheme of things, and some assurance of the validity of our aspirations. The faith which evolution has displaced, or seemed to displace, did indisputably offer such a sense and such an assurance, and in doing so stirred the profound affections of those who held it, not alone of its priests, whose ardor may be suspect, but of a lay world at large. And my question is whether evolution has so far done anything comparable for us, to give aim and dignity and zest to human existence.

On the contrary I suspect that in the depth of our hearts we are still shocked, and that time has not healed our disappointments, or so stabilized the basic premisses of our thinking that we can erect upon them the superstructure of an inspiriting philosophy. Curiously enough we seem to be still standing in the posture of fallen angels looking backward in the direction of our fall. And the flavor of a grim pun still clings to the title of Darwin's *Descent of Man*.

## II

This attitude is comprehensible. Not much time has elapsed to heal the wound and soothe the pride of the human spirit. We have grown up in a world that has moulded our minds in evolutionary ways of thought, but we have also grown up in a long tradition, embodied in language and literature, whose profound voices, speaking more directly to our feelings, are vibrant still with the moving echoes of the old illusion.

But there is the future to face. If we are to go on conceiving life in evolutionary terms —and how in all honesty can we do otherwise?—it is foolish to go on with a philosophy that fails to look for what inspiriting assurance may lurk in its premisses. It is possible, of course, to have a philosophy of despair—but not by choice. At all events it is worth considering what there may be in evolution to engage our liking, and kindle us again with such a high sense of human value and such specific values as will give both unequivocal direction and evident aspiration to a life that is human. That modernism has not found it, has not indeed looked for it, but has "taken off" from evolutionism in the doldrums, in this interim before the breeze of a genuine philosophy on the new basis has had time to gather force, is precisely my own sense of its insufficiency and its own patent discontent.

At bottom, I think, its difficulty is that the biologists, from whom in the first instance we have taken over the human end of the hypothesis, have never, in fact, arrived. They have had a general hypothesis of evolution—a progressive development of life evinced in

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an increasing complexity of bodily structure and increasing specialization of function, from the single cell to the incomparable elaboration of the primates. They have not agreed upon the secret of those mutations, but the evidence is overwhelming that such mutations have taken place, and that the human species is of that organic series. But that is not human evolution.

What still, consciously or unconsciously, troubles us is that the series *is* organic, and that the mutations which have brought about the human species are, by hypothesis, of the same order as the rest. They leave us still brute. But if that were the last word we should not be troubled. We should never have conceived the hypothesis. Just the characteristic that once gave us the illusion that we were on the side of the angels—beings of a different order—is still there. It is that that has given us the hypothesis itself, and the hypothesis does not account for it. It drops us short of where, self-consciously, we *are*.

It is not regret for a specific mythus that accounts for a certain bleakness in the modernistic world, but that the essential fact of which this mythus was the poetry and the symbol is still the supreme fact of human consciousness. We have foregone this poetry and this symbolism for a hypothesis that leaves us intact but naked, there but unaccounted for, unplaced in a universe that to us at least seems alien and hostile, alone of our kind.

A self-conscious rational intelligence is our sweeping distinction, as sharply felt still as in the days of the old illusion. And what is particularly sardonic is the fact that science itself is the product of it. Man is the only animal with a science; it is with his rational intelligence that he creates it, and in his rational consciousness that he possesses it. It is not only of the reason that we think objectively when we call ourselves human; it is *with* the reason that we think subjectively, when we know ourselves human. And it is upon the reason and its consequences that we center our human affections—upon the consciousness itself, the possession of knowledge, the cumulative records of human thought and action, the play of reflection, the friendly intercourse of social life, the development and enjoyment of the arts. To all intents the difference *is* a difference in kind, and never one of the evidences upon which the evolutionary hypothesis was founded.

Here is the kink in the thread as science has left it and as we have accepted it. This is a commonplace, and I mention it not for its own sake but to account for our conscious or unconscious discomfort in the face of a modernism that purports to, but does not, account for the part of us that we care about. Up to a certain point we draw the thread of evolution smoothly through the eye of the mind, and there the thread tangles. On the hither side is all that we identify and value as human. But for that knot—could we but pull the thread smoothly through and feel the continuity of all that we value as human with all that had gone before—we should, I think, soon come to take our hypothesis with a profound affection. Satisfy the mind here, and we should soon find a clear firm ground of joy in the assured significance of our evolved situation. For evolution would, in fact, celebrate a pure triumph, mark a great moment of enfranchisement, and indicate unequivocally the path of human aspiration.

The hypothesis affirms—or at least the human and shocking aspect of it from which modernism derives—that man evolved from brute. Its corollary is that this was always so, even during the millennia of illusion that man was of a different order of being. Had this illusion never intervened, and instead, as the race had grown in rational intelligence and foresight, had an evolutionary theory been propounded, it is hard to suppose but that it would have been matter for high rejoicing. Men had evolved! They had escaped forever from the dungeon of the brute mind! Evolution was all gain!

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Is this sheer phantasy? The hypothesis, to be sure, would have pointed to a moment in the dim past, as the Darwinian hypothesis actually did. But, as in that instance, its realization would have been new and fresh. Its emphasis however—and how could it have been otherwise?—would have fallen upon the escape, upon the evolution itself, and upon the traits that distinguished the newly-evolved creature. The humanizing elements there would have been the rubric of a new testament, red letter characters about which would have played the racial pride and loyalty.

The illusion did intervene. Even so, however, had the hypothesis brought us unequivocally to the point where we are, with our self-conscious rational intelligences, the effect would by now, I venture, be the same. The part of us that thinks, that is curious, that is concerned about itself and broaches its hypothesis about itself, would have found its new place in the universe, and established its domesticity there more snugly than of old.

As it is, the effect of an incomplete hypothesis of evolution has been, not only to leave us—the essential *us* that thinks about the matter and is troubled about it—still undomesticated, but to fix the eyes of science, and hence of modernism, backward, so to speak, not celebrating men's emancipation, and the traits which had evolved, but rather proclaiming still that once this evolution had not taken place. For they have thrown the emphasis of their definition of man on the genus and not on the differentia, upon the points of identity of man and brute, and not upon the point of distinction.

It is only fair to recall that to begin with there were good reasons for this exclusive emphasis of science. It was, no doubt, the necessary strategy of the initial assault; once that outpost was won the ultimate success of the campaign was assured. It was won, indeed, but perhaps could hardly be left with a civilian guard. And science has felt it necessary to keep a belligerent front there ever since.

The civilian world, however, has its own philosophy to care for, construed from whatever data seem to it relevant and significant. It is logical, indeed, that it should look to science for whatever science could offer it, and even alter its whole outlook in view of a scientific hypothesis, incomplete as that hypothesis is. My point is that for the civilian world the logical deduction from this particular hypothesis, even in its incompletion, is that the self-conscious rational intelligence is the last word in evolution, the triumph of that process unequivocally indicated if not explained, and therefore the prime objective of that world, the end of ends, the subject of human affection and enthusiasm, and the goal of human aspiration.

Is this too sentimental a deduction? I am concerned just now with reason, not with sentiment, and in truth the crux is not quite here. The telling note in the revolution of modern thought is not, I know, in the mere alliance of man and brute, or emergence of man from brute, but in the prime corollary of that alliance that man and all his works are the expression of mechanical laws which hold sway in a unitary system throughout the universe. To the uncompromising mechanist and determinist there is nothing, of course, to say. Even to himself he seems helpless, and hopeless. But for anyone who seems to himself to lean toward helplessness in virtue of the evidence, it is at least logical to use upon him the same sort of weapon that has persuaded him to that posture. The example of men of science is a sufficient warrant. It was their reasoning that gave form and currency to the hypothesis of evolution.

With this proviso, then, it is possible to suggest that the logical deduction from that hypothesis is what I may call a sporting obligation. For all science—with its concept of a mechanical universe and its evolutionary hypothesis—is itself the product, pure and

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simple, of that last word of evolution, the rational intelligence. Science is not the universe but our knowledge of it. And if, to the modernist, science seems likely in time to account for the rational intelligence itself, what is immediately and forever certain is that the rational intelligence accounts for science. If there is a flaw in this reasoning, is it malicious to point out that it is still the rational intelligence that perceives it?

The ultimate fact is that this last product of evolution, rational intelligence, has created the whole problem now under discussion, or any problem, for that matter. Rational intelligence has evolved. What it wants, it is almost a truism to say, is its own: its happiness lies in its own fullest enrichment. What it has attained in modernism, as I shall presently try to make more clear, is a lively play of intellect in behalf of a conception of mankind which flouts the thing that makes it human. Since here is at once both the object and the seat of human happiness, little wonder that the modern world has lost its gaiety, its joy, and its humane ardor.

## III

One philosopher, himself a modernist of sorts, has thrown a sardonic light on this unhappiness. In his theory of laughter M. Bergson suggests that amusement is specifically the feeling roused by the sight of automatisms usurping the place of rational self-direction, mannerisms supplanting the delicate responses of manners, habit the subtle adjustments of perceptive conduct, prejudice, the nice discriminations of judgment, or on a lower plane, gravity and the orange peel upsetting the gravity of the dignified pedestrian. It might seem that on this score the modernistic world would be a world of jollity upborn on waves of laughter, for its vision is of automatisms without end. But comedy is amusing only to the aloof spectator; the comic character is scarce funny to himself. Economics, formulating the automatic laws before which the individual is supposed to be helpless, and delineating the economic man who *is* helpless in the face of them, was the first of the modernistic conceptions to gain currency. And long ago Carlyle, in shocked wonder, dubbed it the dismal science—a term scarcely intelligible today, now that our eyes have grown accustomed to the gloom.

The gloom is fairly general; at all events in the wide range of intellectual pursuits which the age loyally supports and encourages, the search is uniformly for the automatisms and compulsions before which, as in classic economics, men are helpless.

There is psychology, for instance, so close to the modernistic world that its name is, next to that of science itself, the most magic of contemporary incantations. For half a century psychology has steadily regressed toward physiology, and in its extreme retreat has reached behaviorism on the one hand or psycho-analysis on the other—automatisms both. Even in those schools of thought antagonistic to behaviorism and wary of Freud it scarcely ventures beyond the problem of perception, and characteristically it seeks for the data of the human mind in rats.

And there is sociology, too, a pure product of the modernistic age, and so avowedly human in its intent as at one time to have called itself the new humanism. Yet it frankly gives up in just the measure in which humanity appears among its data—in a Newton or a Goethe, say, a Bacon or a Shakespeare. Here where the evolution of the human character emerges at its clearest and most unequivocal, it is helpless. It is successful in its methods in the measure in which men are near to the brute—among the least evolved, that is, whose conduct is most automatic, most classifiable, most predictable. And its hopes to be an adequate science of mankind grow attainable in the degree to which men grow less human.

The drift does not stop, however, with the newer branches of learning; it has caught up the older as well. There, for instance,

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where a Newton and a Bacon, a Goethe, and a Shakespeare do appear, where precisely the human intelligence itself is the operative factor—the field of literature, that is—scholarship might be supposed to throw the emphasis of its concern upon the rational intelligences that have created it—upon what they have said in their works, their thoughts and reflections, understandings and interpretations, judgments and evaluations, ideas and points of view. Human life even at its highest, has so large a heritage from the brute, and is equipped with so many automatisms, and so many members of any society are so little evolved, that sociology may understandably be diverted into the simpler, easier and more calculable aspects of its problem. But literature is of a different order. Literature is not life, it is not *given* by nature, but is an imaginative and reflective discourse about life. And literary scholarship, dealing with these imaginative and reflective discourses would seem logically to find at least part of its interest and its function in discovering, elucidating, weighing, and evaluating these utterances.

But to contemporary scholarship in this field such interests are anathema. It has come to be concerned solely with the presumable automatisms that lie *behind the event* of a literary product. It is occupied with literature not as a thing of value in itself, but solely as a culmination of preceding forces—circumstances of time and place, contemporary customs and current ideas, books read and conversations held. It ignores the specific contributions of the writer's own mind, his play of rational intelligence. At best mind is conceived but as the node in which these forces convene to eventuate in a piece of literature.

All this, of course, is not quite fair. I have looked at the modernistic bent of these pursuits and found it thus and thus, and overlooked their ponderance of worth and significance. I know that each one of them is cultivated dispassionately and with rigorous austerity on the basis of its own principles and its own methodology. And their accomplishments, each in its own bailiwick, are probably more intensively perfected for the very limitations put upon them. But apart from the professional ardor of their pursuers, they are, in their large intent, dreary enough. Their intent, at all events, is to watch the encroachments of necessity on human freedom, and the faith on which they are pursued is the faith that in the end the area of freedom will disappear. That that event is a matter of faith is the justification of modernism, but it leaves the door open to scepticism.

Happiness, it is a truism to say, is inseparable from rational desire, and some measure of freedom in the pursuit of it. Not that modernism repudiates desire as an animal instinct. Its suspicions hold only for *rational* desire, for desire in coöperation with intellect, in the deliberate nomination, for-instance, of some sufficient good about which to subordinate the contributive goods of experience. In that coöperation, I should say, lies the organic happiness of any victim of human evolution, head and heart in harmony, head acting after its own economy in ordering its data in significant array, and apprehensive heart at ease in pursuit of what it supremely wants.

But even the mention of happiness as a serious consideration has a sickly sound to modernistic ears. What concern, little man, can the universe have for your desires and your happiness? What, indeed! But science and its corollaries can. And since the universe, if science is on the right track, can amply take care of itself without human aid, science and its corollaries can only be conceived as existing for the sake of mankind, a response to its desires, a pursuit of human happiness.

This suspicion of desire, this tacit repudiation of happiness, this touch of asceticism is, complexly, the note of modernism in the arts, and finds its most explicit utterance there. Yet it is hard to see what they are

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for if not to please. They do, indeed, harbor the seeds of thought, and nourish the tastes which they gratify, but certainly they are not there to teach. And if not to teach, then to please. The arts are the blossoms and not the roots and stock of the delicate plant of human thought—the final flowering into whatever form and color and perfume the plant engenders. And the modernism of the times, "of which vertu engendered is the flour", has had a curious and disconcerting effect upon them, at once turning them back upon themselves, and affecting them there with its own temper.

For modernism is centrifugal; it has found no object of supreme and motivating affection, and no logical center of orientation. Its whole purview is backward into compulsive forces, not forward into desired ends. And art looks forward. Unlike the artist of Athens, then, and unlike the artist of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance the contemporary artist can feel in the life about him no unifying conception in which to find a common bond with the humanity in the midst of which he functions. It isn't there. As a consequence he is thrown back upon his own idiosyncrasy or upon some brand of coterie theory, upon the makeshift enthusiasm of sheer craftsmanship, or the *pis aller* of art for art's sake.

Art cannot function without an objective. Its native movement is from means to end and for want of a strong current to waft him unconsciously into the empyrean, the artist has, singly or in coterie, theorized out of all whooping. The stuff of his theorizing he has drawn from a modernism that is scientific, gazing backward into causes. Translated into terms of motive this takes expression in the refusal to please of which I have spoken, the repudiation of happiness, and the suspicion of desire as the source of illusion. The cry of the moment is a fierce cry for *reality,* whatever that is.

Now of pain there is no question. Whatever else may be illusion, pain is real. What may be longed for is liable to doubt, but no one longs for pain. Pain has no flatteries; when it comes, it comes in spite of every wile of illusion that would do it away; it is there, unequivocal, ineluctable. And there are moods—notably on return from a fool's paradise—when one may welcome pain's blunt and cruel integrity. The modernist in the arts is in such a mood—rebound from a period of soft and delusive flatteries—suspicious of whatever is pleasant, of melody and harmony in music, of beauty and grace in painting and sculpture, of character and intelligence in the subjects and of form in the structure of literature, even, in notorious instances, of intelligibility in language. And in their place he sets up as more trustworthy their painful opposites.

There is much to be said for him in this mood. His difficulty is that in drawing upon the source of modernism he has, like the modernist of the intellectual world, flouted the rational intelligence. Even more than the modernist of that world he thus misses the one thing that can penetrate illusion and rectify and dignify desire. And when he looks into the world at large the draft from that quarter confirms his mood—for desires there are dispersed, chaotic, without recognizable community, and the source of immeasurable illusion. That pain, though not an illusion, may be delusive he has not come to consider.

The arts express us pretty well. Life itself is an art, not a science. It is a pursuit, and what we pursue lies ahead of us. Our happiness, the zestful harmony of the whole consciousness, lies in pursuing, not in being pursued; our instinct of immortality is this fact writ large. In taking over not only the premisses—which is logical, for science *is* the establishment of premisses—but also the method of scientific thought, modernism as a philosophy of living has run counter to the native economy of life. For the attitude of science is retrospective in scrutiny of pursuing forces—an imperative scrutiny indeed for one who

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would know the lie of the land in his own pursuits.

And the failure of modernism, as I see it, is that in taking over from science the premisses of evolution it has failed to see that what did evolve was precisely this different economy, this self-conscious rational intelligence, which does look forward in imagination and is motivated by what lies ahead. It has failed, therefore, to utilize this economy, and failed, as a consequence, to see that this economy is the supreme end of human pursuit—at once the means and the end of all that men cherish, even of science and modernism itself—at once the enjoyer and the enjoyed.

# ON DISCOVERING A CERTAIN CLASSIC IN MIDDLE LIFE

*by Charles Hanson Towne*

These iron words were burning on this page,
  Unknown to me until this rapturous night!
Thus lonely men, caught in some anchorage,
  Are ignorant of Italia's skies and light.
Now I have found at last this Attic sun;
  This overwhelming beauty now is mine;
And the words troop into my brain,—each one
  New faith for cloudy days, august, divine.

Youth lost all this! Its placid hours ran on,
  Bereft of loveliness as sweet as Spring.
Yet the slow-marching Summer lays hold upon
  This marvel, and a richer blossoming
Is in each bough, and the world spins new gold. . . .
Who need fear Autumn, or the Winter's cold?

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# FRANÇOIS MAURIAC

*by George N. Shuster*

THE MORALIST is never refuted by his unpopularity. And mankind, which is always in rebellion against the prophets, nevertheless ends by applauding them heartily. These simple truths have been known for centuries, but it has been to a considerable extent the business of contemporary literature to demonstrate them. Sundry hundreds of novelists have regretted that Balzac-people continue to live in the world and even supervise its affairs. A consciousness of misdirection and moral delinquency is, indeed, so widespread that from a distance the collective voice of humanity must sound like a unanimous anathema. If even so the moralist is derided and the preacher scorned, it is because we have so generally lost all hope of integrity. Balzac-people seem the best the race is entitled to expect. And few of our contemporaries will affirm that the craving for wholeness is more than a delusion. Possibly this attitude is the most serious and important bequest of the war.

This last can be seen visibly exerting an influence if we reduce the problem to its most primitive constituent, the conflict between spirit and flesh. A thousand war-time matters intensified consciousness of just this battle: the brutalities of camp life, the acute yearning for sex union under circumstances which rendered it brief and lawless, the sharpened awareness of death at a moment when the bliss of existence had been immeasurably heightened, the discovery of delirium simultaneous with a new discovery of God. It will forever remain impossible to describe all this as it actually was. One still very interesting commentary on it is the stream of virtually forgotten fiction which immediately followed the war. We read it in Mr. Wells's perplexedly heretical *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* and in M. Henri Bordeaux's perplexedly Catholic *Résurrection de la chair*. At all events, a tremendous desire for purity, for a victory over sex, coincided with what seemed to be new discoveries concerning its invincibility. There had existed no little evidence for the strength of lust, but the theories of Freud and the novels of such men as James Joyce and Marcel Proust simply bowled over every survivor from Queen Victoria's age. If we have any saints they do not, I think, waste much time trying to confute Freud or Proust. They recognize in both ingenious if unusually myopic reasoners on an ancient theme.

But what is the position of the saint in the matter? Or, more generally, where is the ethical ideal? These queries have inaugurated the most significant discussion in modern letters—that inquiry into the aspirations and limitations of the personality which has led to probably unequalled errors and certainly to unprecedented psychological knowledge. When one remembers that English fiction prospered during more than two centuries by reason of seventeenth-century analysis of character, our own literature seems



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assured of a rich future. But what we know must be gathered round some feasible interpretation of how to act. Accordingly the debate eventually settles down to an inquiry into the just cultivation of the self. In French letters the great protagonists have been Maurice Barrès and André Gide; and I hold that anyone who examines their affirmations with some care will have the clue to what is central in the present-day literature of France. Such an examination cannot, of course, be attempted here. We shall merely risk the generalization that whereas Barrès attempted a synthesis of the fundamental, unifying "drifts" which underlie personality through surrender to the will, Gide suggests that the artist will profit by a certain formula of inaction, of resistance to the will.

## II

Though what has been said may serve to introduce François Mauriac, who seems to me the most significant among the younger French novelists, it is far from being enough to account for him adequately. His novels divide themselves into two groups, one of which (earlier in time) is illustrated by *l'Enfant chargé de chaînes*, and the other of which (published, for the most part, in the series which Bernard Grasset issued as *Cahiers vert*) probably reaches two contrasted climaxes in *Le Baiser au lépreux* and *Destins*. Along with this more or less genuinely objective writing there has gone—like the systole and diastole of one personality—a constant effort at self-explication. It is significant that one finds this relatively calm in *La Vie et la mort d'un poète*, and quite turbulent in *Dieu et Mammon*. A glance at these five books may serve to give an impression of the major points of Mauriac's spiritual compass.

Jean-Paul, in the first book, is a young man deeply branded a Catholic, and marked with the curse which makes one see the universe as either beautiful or ugly. A curious habit of introspection, in which tendencies formed by priest educators blend with not a little sensualism, governs his relations with his father, with his fiancée (poor Marthe, despite the beauty of her hair, sighed uncommonly long for love), and with the world at large. But if our hero's self interests him more than all else in the world, it also arouses his dismay and contempt. He is *l'enfant chargé de chaînes*—a boy the complexity of whose ties to art, pleasure, religion and family entangles him in a web. From his point of view, action is at once the desired goal and the form of human incompetence which lends itself best to satire. Through the medium of his hero, Mauriac douses with irony both the artistic impulses to which youngsters of that time (1913—but of all times as well) loved to succumb, and the plans of moral reform which the ardent supporters of Marc Sagnier (Catholic, democrat and pacifist) considered the spiritual pinnacle of their age. More fundamentally, however, the novel deals with one kind of conversion. After having tried the sowing of wild oats in a timid way, Jean-Paul remembers that he cannot help being orthodox. He musters enough courage to profess adherence also to the family and to life. But this conversion cannot be a complete *volte face*. Marthe, on her wedding day, is described as foreseeing "the multiplication of caresses—and the serenity of silent pardons".

If the value of this novel lies almost wholly in the sincerity with which it interprets adolescence, it is nevertheless stimulating primarily because it is a "religious" novel. Not, of course, an edifying treatise or a plea for some moral principle, but rather a measure of truth regarding an average spiritual life in a given era. *Le Baiser au lépreux* retains the same outlook in an entirely different human climate. Jean Péloueyre, deformed of body but nobly sane, if somewhat emancipated, of soul, finds to his astonishment that he may marry Naomi d'Artialh, most beautiful and virtuous of the village maids. But the wife cannot surmount her loathing for the body of her husband. They are fastened

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to each other like two dead worlds, and the friction is pain. Jean does not struggle to ward off disease and death; Naomi tries desperately to barricade her heart against another man's love. But when her hunchback mate has succumbed, she finds that "her fidelity to the dead man was to be her humble glory". The soul achieves its triumph, sombre and melancholy though it be, over the flesh.

By way of vengeance, the flesh is bitterly victorious in *Destins*. In no other of Mauriac's books are the normalities of religious life so completely laid bare to the scalpel. Perhaps the critics had angered an author so conscious of the gulf which must forever lie between the hereditary child of the Church and the ardent *converti;* or perhaps Gide may have been right when he said that in this book Mauriac had approached, curiously and ironically, the border which no Christian dare cross in his quest for images interpretive of life. At all events the novel, which leaves the strange impression of having been etched with a red-hot literary needle, is a summary of what Elizabeth Gormac and young Robert Lagave have wrested from life. He is a dissolute incarnation of youth's pagan beauty (it might almost be asserted that he is hardly anything more), whose friends are roués or worse, whose death is a tragic and unholy accident, but who wears bravely the spicy laurel of a faun. And Elizabeth Gormac? Though she had her properties and an eminently satisfactory son who was both a priest and a missionary, the one thing which prevented her "being one of those corpses that are carried down the stream of life" was a sudden, secret but violent love for Robert, whom she had known as a little boy carrying his wet bathing suit in his hand and about whose sins she cherished no illusions.

Turn now to the other side of Mauriac. *La Vie et la mort d'un poète* is an exquisite, touching memoir of André Lafon, one of many sacrifices to the war. Though the book is honest in its endeavor to describe the meek genius, the self-effacing grandeur, of a deeply Christian poet, it is none the less a reflection of its author's own thought. Lafon had failed as a novelist, despite one notable success, because of his "resolution in advance to do good", and a "certain literature that edifies" is untrue to life. Though it would be necessary, for the good of feeble souls, to invent astringent censors if these did not exist, "to paint the man of today in all his misery is to uncover the abyss created, in the modern world, by the absence of God". Mauriac believes that, had he been a priestly counselor, he would have said to Lafon: "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit". Let him work for his own interior perfection until such time as he senses himself "solidly established in God". But in Lafon there had stirred the thirst for purity which is, perhaps, the premonition of elected souls. In modern literature we honor those who "had no career, who retained a tragic sense of life". And the little book closes with praise for Barrès and Pascal.

By comparison *Dieu et Mammon* is a summary of the spiritual journey undertaken after 1924. It is a tangled, a difficult but a progressive book (1929). Literature is an author's surrender to his public. And now, in view of the dissolution of the old Christian realization of truth, "there are as many verities as there are individuals". What has the author found in himself "since he began to know himself"? This is the modern query, and an author can, these days, hardly avoid an exposition of himself. Mauriac professes to be a Catholic because, in the sense employed by Pascal, he was born one. "I belong to the race of those who, born in the Catholic faith, have known, ever since the age of maturity was approaching, that they could never escape from this faith, that it was not in their power to leave it or return to it after a period of absence." And the difficulty? "Now I imagined that Christianity was the only thing with which the world was concerned, and again I felt that I was a prisoner inside a little Mediterranean sect. But it was

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necessary to live somehow; I had to find my way at any cost; and so I remember with what ardor I set about, at the age of sixteen, proving to myself the truth of a religion to which I knew myself bound for all eternity."

In the spirit of this faith, God is seen as He from whom there is no escape—who will perforce sublimate even human love by making it affection for Himself. And in the fever of literary effort one is conscious of the flight from Him, no less than of "the atrocious ill-will" of fellow Christians, to whom the apparent non-utility of art is beyond understanding. There follows a subtle but strong defence of the artist's faith. "A man is born the victim of his cross." Hence sin becomes the sole issue; and in the words of Péguy, "the sinner and the saint are the two equally essential parts of the mechanism of Christianity". One may be one or the other, but once inside the mechanism choice is imperative. "The sinner cannot escape the mark of his offence. The author cannot dodge responsibility." But that author is none the less destined to write, to affect the largest number possible. And if the novel is "nothing if it is not a study of man", the question whether a writer ought "to alter the object of his study and falsify the life he observes in order that no soul may be disturbed" becomes acute. Complicated though the drama of the Christian novelist may be, the recipe is, ultimately, "Purify the source!"

## III

Such, imperfectly codified, are the essential traits of Mauriac's career. The course is a development, both in more or less subconscious artistry and in critical reflection, but it is even more the natural graph of a state of mind. For Mauriac (and of course for so many of his contemporaries) life is not so much a moral and metaphysical opportunity as a moral and metaphysical problem. He is bound hand and foot to the great French mystics and preachers—Pascal, Bossuet, Lacordaire—but he is a little disdainful of the intelligence. Faith is, for him, not something into which one can be argued. It is a form of living, almost a social stamp, with which one's soul is branded. Yet because it is so, man's drama becomes many times as intense as it might otherwise be. For a man of this temper, flouting a moral mandate is something entirely different from disregarding a "law of nature" or formally ignoring a statute. It is a violation of the harmony in one's own self. But these violations are fatally easy. They continually scourge the soul with its own shame. Indeed, Mauriac may sometimes be fairly accused of setting the forces of good and evil on a plane too nearly that of equality. A tendency to Manicheism is, no doubt, present, assuming that this be interpreted now as excessive pessimistic humiliation of the species.

It is curious to note how persistently this inclination to the views of the Jansenists has appeared in modern French letters. When the Anglo-Saxon is a puritan, he is a self-righteous person, whose crimes, like Bunyan's, lie in the past; but when a Frenchman is a puritan, he is ceaselessly maddened by his unworthiness. This point of view is not so reprehensible as we sometimes think it (unless diseased it is really a kind of tropical religious inquietude), and in art it affords an interesting contemporary advantage. One of Mauriac's recent critical essays (*Le Roman*) discusses the fact that fiction writing is impoverished by the modern man's failure to attribute fundamental importance to sin. Surrenders to the flesh, illicit amours, are mere incidents, and so life becomes just a chronicle and not the drama which stirred even the author of *Madame Bovary*. Now precisely because he does attribute so much grandeur to the service of God, and so much significance to moral evil, the Christian of Mauriac's temper may legitimately feel that he offers to literature a form of intense activity, moving and mysterious as no mere chronicle can be. It is, of course, easy to object that the

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adventure of goodness in personal experience is just as important, and that in it—even if there be no more than a mere surmisal of God—greater things are revealed than in the drama of sin. That has immemorially been the English point of view. But it is not the French point of view, and Mauriac is, despite his culture, one of the most indigenous, one of the least cosmopolitan, among living writers in France.

This last fact becomes more apparent when one considers the social outlook of these novels. Mauriac has dashed off one book and several essays to explain the circumstances under which he grew to maturity. Bordeaux, city of bourgeois families who are often land-owners and vintners, occupies in his work much the same place that is granted to Lorraine in the books of Barrès. Yet this attachment, which implies that all fresh experience reposes upon an underlying stratum of souvenir, is by no means entirely affectionate. "I have always contrasted Bordeaux with the Provence, in order to expose its nakedness," Mauriac declares, "and nevertheless I love it—which is to say, I love myself." Then there is also the rural scene. "The country places where I lived as a child and to which I still return regularly embodied," he tells us, "the two essential aspects of the Girondin country—heaths and vineyards. These I may describe as being as different as Italy and Norway could be, but in the region which knows them both my peasant race, which has never moved, plunges down its deep roots." Add to this an unswerving Catholic entourage in the old "country style"—relatives, even a brother, in the priesthood; fidelity at prayer; an indefinable, earnest scrupulousness of demeanor; education in select but strict religious institutions; and a definite orientation towards life as something for which one is perilously responsible.

All this, in France, cannot be separated from class consciousness, and Emanuel Berl seems correct in saying that Mauriac writes (as it were) inside a social prison. That is not a fault but a destiny. It explains, however, why the canvas of these novels is seldom larger than the problem which obsesses them all, and which is invariably the experience of a family. Curiously, Mauriac's story is never that of an individual soul, a human pair, a crowd. The stage is always an interior flanked by four walls, where all the normal personages from grandparent to child in the cradle move in the glare from the hearth. In *l'Enfant chargé de chaînes*, Jean-Paul is both irritated and encompassed by family ties. Thérèse Desqueyroux is the victim of her domestic life. And if Dr. Clerreseux, the paterfamilias of *Le Désert de l'amour*, is converted in the end to conjugal bliss it is only because senility and defeat have worn him down. Mauriac is afflicted with nostalgia for all those things which lie beyond the verandah, but once out there he succumbs to the fundamental human malady—homesickness. Few men have agreed more fervently with Pascal that all human woe is the result of not being able to sit tranquilly in a room—and none has been more ruthlessly tormented with a desire to get out. Mauriac is he whom Barrès proposed as a model; but he is always the one whom Gide finds in the crowd of listeners.

Let us admit frankly that Mauriac is drawn to the "things of this world" for the same reasons that so much affect the post-war generation—the charm of all that is sensual, color and symmetry and youthful flesh. He can caress these things with as much zest as the Renaissance poet's, perhaps; but he can also phrase his renouncement of them in terms not of pure spiritual sacrifice, but in the language of a man who has discerned the absence of satisfaction in them, the penalty which beauty exacts, the lassitude of desire fulfilled. When Mauriac's theme is lust his men and women are no healthy animals, brotheling like pagans, but creatures tormented even as were Paolo and Francesca in the inferno of their discontent, seeking sweetness under the blows of a scourge. He

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can set before you the mysterious throes of adolescence curious of passion, but he cannot imagine them akin to happiness. One's chief regret is that happiness does not exist in Mauriac's world. Joy—even the most legitimate joy—is always discounted because of the high tariff exacted for it. He himself, as well as others, accounted for this by assuming a tendency to Manicheism and Jansenism, regarding which something has been said. Perhaps it is really the fault of Mauriac's race, inured to spiritual and physical thrift. Crœsus trembled when the gods showered him with their bounty. A certain kind of Frenchman—who, alas, does not figure prominently in Anglo-Saxon impressions of the land of Gaul—shudders when Dame Fortune leaves a Christmas gift.

If we follow Mauriac's work to the present, it may be helpful to bear in mind the interpretive data thus summarized. The work of the earlier period might be entitled Studies in Esthetic Adolescence. Its value lies first in its description of a state of mind which existed in France prior to the war (when the movement of return to the Christian faith among young men was really begun), and in the poetic evocation of the troubles incident to crossing the threshold into life. A significant illustration of the first is to be found in the place occupied by Marc Sagnier and his *Sillon* democrats in French Catholic activity after 1900. These, anxious to establish a Christian social order on the basis of modern thinking and political practice, were governed by the "moral primate" expounded by followers of the Abbé Lacordaire. The Vatican discerned excesses in this crusade, which ran afoul of traditionalism in France, and it was soon explicitly condemned. But among the young men there were many whom Sagnier's formulas did not satisfy. On the one hand were those too definitely fixed in their *cadres* ever to be yanked loose by crusading expeditions (and among them was Mauriac); on the other hand were those who sought a more rigid, more reactionary formula (and among these were the early adherents to *l'Action française*). Much of Mauriac's early writing implies his attitude toward this development. First came two volumes of poems—*Les Mains jointes* and *Adieux à l'adolescence*—characterized by a languorous beauty of phrase, an excessively romantic melancholy, and a discernment of nature not dissimilar to what one finds in Francis Jammes, the Basque poet.

The earlier novels, interspersed with essays and short stories, followed almost immediately. *La Robe prétexte* was, I believe, favorably reviewed in France and England as a work of great promise. For us of today it seems to stand apart from the rest of its author's achievement, not merely because, narrated in the first person, it undoubtedly incorporates autobiographical material, but also because it voluntarily affects naïveté. As a portrait of Bordelaise family life, it is not a little malicious. The boy hero exists because Mauriac, naturally addicted to the use of memory, is reliving his boyhood days. Later he would make the *souvenir* an integral part of his artistic method. For the moment, it is indulged in for its own sake—perhaps because this variety of literature was then popular everywhere.

*La Chair et le sang* is a more troubled and inchoate novel. Claude Favereau, peasant lad who has abandoned the idea of studying for the priesthood because of an all too sensuous nature, and Edward Dupont-Gunthier, cynical son of a parvenu and amateur in all the pleasures, are poles in a drama of two families. Claude is circumscribed, safeguarded perhaps, by his always rudimentary environment; Edward's career is feverish, with an assemblage of intrigues which has led a French critic (Paul Archambault) to term the whole "like an unhealthy place where sickly lilies are wilting". And if, in the end, virtue is frugally rewarded and vice condemned with pathos, the story remains a more than relatively unconvincing attempt to interpret the sting of the flesh. *Préséances* is

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a better, though still more acrid, book. The love of Augustin, a boy upon whom has been set the seal of election, for Florence, capricious and heartless daughter of a provincial bourgeois family that wishes to rise in the world, is wrecked by the girl's calm vote for a life of wealth and pleasure. But though the baseness of her marriage and subsequent amours is reflected in the steady deterioration of her soul, a dream of perfection subsists, twined round the memory of Augustin. When she finally squanders that, too, tragedy is the only conceivable end. *Préséances* hardly exists for its own sake. It is an almost venomous critique of a mundane bourgeoisie, the vices of which are scathingly symbolized.

If in these first books unity is attained through a blending of symbolism and realistic observation, the author himself is always firmly conscious of the duality of good and evil, of flesh and spirit, of aspiration and failure, which seems to rule life. The post-war novels attain to a new and firmer unity of construction, but the philosophic duality is still more strongly emphasized. We have already noticed *Le Baiser au lépreux*, in which the symbol is so convincingly real and the narrative so classically direct that one is reminded of the grandeur of antique tragedy for all the modernity of its feeling. *Le Fleuve de feu* is a sombre tale of a war-time love which plunges Gisèle de Plailly, victim of a frighteningly narrow family circle, into a career of passion from which she emerges finally into repentance with something of the despair which might stir in an animal hounded into a cave toward which the enemy may yet find his way. Here is, frankly, a narrative of a world without light, based on Mauriac's formula: "To describe the man of today in all his misery is to uncover the abyss which the absence of God has made to gape in our world".

*Genitrix*, is perhaps the most impressive book in the whole list, not only because it is written with unforgettable vigor but also because the theme is the essence of all that (to date at least) Mauriac has had to say. Despite appearances, he is neither fond of the subject of illicit love nor interested in the duel between the sexes. In the first place his method does not favor the "psychology of the crisis" (in Bourget's sense), but exactly the opposite—the discovery, in the tapestry woven by long time, of the net in which the human victim is caught. Passion is only one of the forms that net may take. In *Genitrix* it is the most revered, the most sacred of all affections —mother love—which entangles. Fernand Cazenave is bound hand and foot to his mother, relentless tyrant who is in turn the victim of her own morbidly constricted temperament. In the old house to which visitors no longer come, they watch Fernand's young wife die of loneliness and hatred of her mother-in-law. He is not in the least cruel, but only slow, stupid, powerless to escape the tentacles of his mother. And once he has lost the wife he had proved unable to love, a fierce passion for her leads him to live only in the memory of her, so that Madame Cazenave is beaten and famished. The final pages, showing Fernand alone in the old house, are horrible. If there are many other pages in literature which describe so perfectly what it means to exist without love, I do not know them.

Written in a single jet and with a dictional density of rare perfection, *Genitrix* nevertheless succeeds in conveying with marvellous skill the slow creep of time. I cannot help thinking that, from this point of view, it is a more remarkable achievement than any book of Proust's. For while that novelist can convey the sense of the interminable by being himself interminable, Mauriac's treatment of the problem frequently reminds one of the evocative genius of Shakespeare himself. But the majesty, the wholeheartedness, of the great dramatist are missing. *Genitrix* is the story of a cage—of human life conceived of as a cage.

The cage is likewise the central concern of

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*Thérèse Desqueyroux* and *Le Désert de l'amour*. In the first book, the unfortunate heroine, having neither faith nor happiness, beats against the walls of her insipid family life until a way of escape suddenly seems to present itself. But the attempt to murder her husband leads to no release, but instead to a still more maddening incarceration with "people". The second novel comes near to being Mauriac's best approach to the analysis of passion. Yet we race here on no flood of feeling toward a romantic or tragic end. Raymond Courrèges, enamoured of the strange woman whose position in the world gives the lie to her professed spiritual aspirations, is chained to a kind of sadistic hate once she has refused his advances. It is, in its way, a shrewd, true, observant book. But one might well have asked of Mauriac: Where in this world you describe are the mercy and the lure of Christ?

He had, however, not yet finished with his terrible problem. The short tales unified by the title *Trois Récits* indicate, indeed, that Mauriac's tendency to compress duration into an *aperçu* was driving him strangely near the form which Poe had chosen to set forth much the same sort of thing (though Mauriac is not in the least like Poe), but the matter dealt with is still the familiar substance of his novels. In one tale, for instance, the hero walks the treadmill of passion, though the professionalized state of his personality renders him utterly incapable of passion. Every reader might well wonder if his author considers love at all possible or permissible, or the ideal in any manner compatible with the real. Mauriac soon replied in *Souffrances du chrétien*, a famous essay which restated the old problem in the most acute form. Christ would have all of man; the fundamental evil, therefore, is concupiscence. Yet human nature is so constituted that, excepting for the greatest saints, there is no escape from desire, against which even the sturdiest arguments cannot prevail. Here Mauriac reaches the last stage of his method of playing the points of view of Barrès and Gide against each other. To the first it is granted that the resolve to follow the Saviour is the fundamental, inescapable business of man; but with the second it is argued that man cannot pursue this business without ceasing to be human. The sharpness with which the dilemma is stated may be unreasonable, but it is contemporary.

Mauriac, however, now suddenly recovered from concentrating upon the world of his time to consider those aspects of life which are timeless and serene. In *Bonheur du chrétien* there is joyful recognition—possibly achieved at the cost of some effort—of that happiness accorded to those who shoulder the light burden. And the very fine and thoughtful preface to *Trois Récits* ends with these words: "'The Man Who Strove Toward Inspiration Through Humiliation', the most attractive story in the present collection which might well have borne this title suggested by a phrase of Pascal, the author has not written—and is, indeed, not yet worthy to have written". Still more pertinent are the later sections of *Dieu et Mammon*, shot through with self-criticism of the most perceptive kind. That Christianity here wells up so clear and strong after an adventure in actuality may well be accepted as a testimonial of its virility. Not that Mauriac had ever ceased to be a creature of his faith. But his route was perilous. The literature of men like Paul Claudel and Jacques Maritain is a literature which knows the world but not men. Its source is a mystic choice—individual, elect. It resembles Saint Paul rather than Saint Vincent de Paul. Mauriac's writing is the novelist's peculiar and hazardous art. I know of no saints who could be entrusted with it excepting Augustine—or Magdalen.

## IV

View him as you will, Mauriac is an artist. That can only mean an individual, with the gifts and weaknesses of an individual. There

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has been a social architecture, a more or less socialized poetry. Both Amiens and Dante have a vast, densely populated background. But no such thing as a social fiction can exist, and for two reasons. First, the novel demands an act of creation. An author must give birth to his characters, and set them to living in such surroundings as he can provide for them. Secondly the art of fiction is —regardless of appearances—a lyric art. It must have a pattern, but even more it must have a passion. Dickens and Hardy, England's greatest, possibly, struggle for composition and style, succeeding only rarely. But they abide because they have been able to give their writing a meaning, sometimes termed a life. I think Mauriac is of their company. None of his characters seems a whole. They are less obviously caricatures than Dickens's; they happen to be presented with greater skill. But I submit that Madame Cazenave haunts one's memory for essentially the same reason that Gradgrind does.

Let us carry the comparison, odious though it be, a little farther. Dickens was obsessed by a vision of charity and a dream of what it might accomplish. This was not a solitary sentiment, a kind of forlorn hope, but the basic emotion of the Victorian time, when the great modern effort to relieve the plight of the industrialized poor was begun. In other words: Dickens was not a "novelist with a purpose" but a vital artist who had got hold of the most virile emotion of his era. You can discern the difference when you think of Godwin. Here was a man whose writing was, no doubt, better than Dickens's, and whose artistic gift was worth noticing. But Godwin had got hold of an emotion, an idea, which seemed silly to the majority of his contemporaries and which seems even sillier now. He may have reaped harvests of ecstasy from his notions of education and reform, but normal England was first startled and then bored. The decline of Mr. Kipling's popularity probably has its origins in the same cause.

In Mauriac's case, the problem which engrossed his attention may fairly be termed absorbingly interesting. How shall the individual realize his individuality? Must one go whole hog with Nietzsche, venturing beyond good and evil to a new territory occupied exclusively by oneself enthroned? Or can one hover between good and evil, with the majority—between yearning for the strength of nobleness, integrity, sacrifice, and concession to manifold license? Or shall one say that the law of Yahweh and Christ is the priceless recipe for triumph over the world? We may talk of Greece, the Orient and Bolshevism. But the most revolutionary, the most explosive, queries of the age are those named above. That they have been put and answered in conflicting fashions is a fact which constitutes the basic challenge to the modern social system. For this has not relished such questions. It has had a conventional idealism, which one may find in Tennyson; a conventional morality, admirably summarized by Judge Gary; and a conventional religion accountable for the present weakness of the churches. When the individual decided to become unconventional, he was really a Lenin in petto.

Mauriac asks all the questions. His novels are an inquiry into the reasonableness, the validity of them all. I do not see how this investigation could have been valuable if it had not been sincere, but there can be no doubt that Mauriac placed his own response in the test tube. And none of the experiments to which it was there submitted was anything like so critical as the resolve to set it over against the life of the time. To compare an intransigent faith with the assent modern paganism gives to the rule of pleasure is to assume a risk—but it is a risk thousands have taken, either unconsciously or advisedly. In a little book published immediately after the war and entitled *De quelques Cœurs inquiets*, Mauriac offered "short essays in religious psychology" with the object of proving that "it is necessary that the veteran

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soldiers of our spiritual family should astonish the world by the alliance within themselves of the Christian virtues and those human endowments which stamp them chiefs of the temporal order, organizers of the material world". But after that he came back to the perplexing question: what is the temporal order, what is the material world? And if his books sometimes reply with wilfully conjured darkness, if his diagnosis occasionally seems to omit the will-to-improve almost entirely, they nevertheless remain rich in perspicacity, charity and humility.

There is no doubt that Mauriac has more than once brushed with his contemporaries, particularly his Catholic contemporaries, over the question of art. If to some the frankness of *La Fleuve du feu* was disconcerting, to others the metaphysical incompleteness of Mauriac's world seemed obvious and deplorable. It seems to me that Ramon Fernandez is right when he points to the circumstance that Mauriac's novels are "saturated with sensations", most of them odors and sounds rather than visual images, which form a natural frame inside which the personages seem to us "familiar". This is to be accounted for, however, not through an esthetic theory but by Mauriac's ability to steep himself in family life. If we attend to the matter a little, we see that domesticity is only rarely a matter of the eyes. A wife seldom pauses to think of how her husband "looks", and a parsonage is seldom arranged with a view to providing interior decorators with photographs. But you can always tell a parsonage by its odors, and intimacy between husband and wife becomes an affair of listening for footsteps, of vocal intonations and in unhappier moments of smells and gestures. I feel that no other novelist has employed this kind of thing so understandingly as Mauriac.

How all this everyday sensory material affects the spirit is a subject about which much could be written. Here is the universe which truly hems us in, which tempts us with both its voluptuous and its acrimonious suggestions, and which constantly testifies to our bondage. One whose spirit is not without a puritanical strain will, when sensitive, experience all with added keenness. And for Mauriac the odor of a body wet with rain may reveal the extent to which one is chained to the earth, incapable of ascent. Whatever one may allege against it in detail, this is a French and Christian realism, a French and Christian homeliness. The soul of the West has never trusted in abstractions or even in conventionality. But it has believed in a nobler world—in greater human possibilities—than Mauriac has hitherto been willing to consider. Doubtless there has been a little of Spengler, of the romantic discouraged, in us all since the War. Now our novelist himself has voted for greater confidence. What that shall bring remains to be seen.

## BOOKS BY FRANÇOIS MAURIAC PUBLISHED IN AMERICA

THÉRÈSE. *Liveright.*

DESTINIES. *Covici-Friede.*

THE DESERT OF LOVE. *Covici-Friede.*

THE FAMILY (including A KISS TO THE LEPER and GENETRIX). *Covici-Friede.*

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# BOOKS

*by Maristan Chapman*

When controversy breaks out, everyone with the remotest knowledge of the subject feels impelled to have his say. Yet the only man competent to speak is the statistician working in an economic vacuum. If an innocent bystander interferes, he is shouted down as a layman who knows nothing about it; and if a specialist makes comment, he is crushed by the statement that he is biased. Thus, in the furor over cheaper books, publishers, authors, reviewers, distributors and readers should be eliminated. Being, as an interested party, automatically disqualified from saying anything to the point, I shall devote this article to random comment, in the course of which, I trust, I shall prove nothing and refute nobody. It is my aim to confuse rather than to confound the reader.

* * *

When statisticians, or whoever it is that finds out these things, set out to discover what is the matter with this country's book-buying, they commonly begin by saying that Europe does much better per capita. Forgetting that Europe has more capitas per bookstore, we hang our national head in embarrassment. Let us lift it again and look about. In the first place, it is not altogether a superior book-consciousness that makes the European such a rapacious book-buyer. For one thing he has not so many other distractions. Very likely he has no car and so, being unable to crawl along the congested boulevard on Sunday afternoon, he is compelled to remain in or around home. He must do something—why not read? Then, too, books, in the old countries are a habit. They have been acquired through generations and handed down from father to son. Homes are congested with books. Some families inherit whole libraries. And there are not only bookstores, but second-hand bookstores, and stalls of books on the public streets. The problem there is rather what to do with the tons of existent books, and it is solved quite naturally by buying more, because when human beings have too much of anything they tend to acquire more of the same commodity. With possession comes the acquisitive spirit. Take a man who has never had a book in his house and he will be the last to notice the lack.

In the booklessness of our American homes as compared with the European, we must not forget how many gorgeous magazines we have that are, to all intents and purposes, books. They beat anything that the book-buying Czechs and Tartars have; and cost only twenty-five cents or such a matter. Moreover they may be thrown away without a qualm, or given to Boy Scouts scouting for waste paper; or we can acquire merit by giving them to some institution when appealed to for aid, thus saving a donation in cash and getting rid of the things with the same stone.



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This throwing-away question deserves more attention. So far it has been ignored by the controversialist whose concentration is all on the side of acquirement. When a man so far forgets himself as to buy a book, he has to part with actual cash—anywhere from one dollar to three dollars and fifty cents. That is bad, but, in addition, he must have a place to keep his purchase. He cannot, at that price, hand it on or throw it away. He can sit out his three-fifty's worth of theatre ticket, and get up and go after the final curtain without thinking of taking the seat home with him. He can even be scalped to the extent of twelve dollars for that seat and still leave it behind when the play is over. Similarly, he can ride out many dollars' worth of gasoline with never a regret that he cannot roll up the highway and take it home to put on a shelf in his garage.

Why is it that a book seems to cost so much more than any other form of entertainment? It does, even when we have calculated that by the time everybody in our own family and the neighbors' families have got through with it it has cost each reader something like five cents and seven mills. The cultural value of almost any modern novel is equal to the cultural value of almost any play at present on the boards, but still the book is prohibitive in price. Leaving out the cultural value, which may already have been done for us by the author, a book, just as a piece of merchandise, as manufactured goods, is better value than most things. Consider the paper, the ink, the art, the format—consider this, that, and the other, and you will readily see what I mean.

* * *

It stands to reason that literature, being a trade commodity, is subject to grading as to quality—a circumstance that even in contemplation should make many writers shake in their shoes. Nothing, of course, can be done about the quantity. That got out of control with the advent of competitive publishing; and the printing press has become a mechanical monster that has far outstripped the writing capacity of the nation. When literature was an art that operated under individual patronage, things, in this respect at least, marched better—and fewer. Now we have a twofold impetus to output—the increased opportunities for the artists, and the increased opportunities for commercialized talent.

To avoid becoming embroiled with those who feel intensely upon this distinction, let me hastily sidestep the question by saying that the division is most casual. Upon one side is the artist, a peculiarly constituted being in whom the necessity of expression is so urgent that he must write, be the consequences, and royalties, what they may; and on the other side there is the writer, who, having a gift for spinning words into coherent stories, goes, eyes open, into the business of writing books for sale. These two types of writer have nothing to say to one another, but they descend with almost equal force upon the reader, and with almost equal price.

Take both of them working eight hours a day and the consequence is such an increase in the number of books that reading them becomes a physical impossibility. So magazines giving reviews and outlines increase in circulation, and these having become unwieldy the tabloid reviews come along to condense the reviews and outlines, until it is unnecessary even to see the new books in order to remain up to date.

And the more people do not buy books, the more they complain they are too high-priced. Of course increased literacy makes potential readers, just as increased speed of living and the need to motor makes for illiteracy. The consequence is nullification, or would be if either factor had anything to do with the case.

That point having been cleared up, let us get to the basic facts. Says one publisher:

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"Look at the success of the reprints. They are absorbed avidly, which proves there is a hungry mob of readers with little to spend for literature. Let us make all books cheaper —supply and demand and one thing and another". "On the contrary," says another publisher, "do not look at the reprints, or you will be misled. A reprint is by no means the same thing as a new book. The reprint has already had its advertising done for it, and its market is assured; it is well known and ardently desired by the class of readers who can appreciate it—and these invariably are the people who have to wait for the price to come down. They buy the reprint eagerly, knowing it is good, but it does not follow that they will venture even a small sum upon a new book that may be second grade or worse. Furthermore, a reprint is already in the plates and therefore a lot cheaper to make than a new book."

In fact, if we consider a competitive publishing in all its aspects and listen to the publishers of the United States in convention assembled, we are forced to the conclusion—the higher the fewer. On the other hand, in the matter of price to consumer, the lower the less, although it would be easy to conclude that the lower the higher.

It is because of the danger of misapprehension on the part of the reader that so much has to be said on all sides. It precludes any possibility of his coming to a conclusion, a consummation devoutly to be avoided, for, if he did he would leave the publishers far behind, and it is the very essence of their existence that they be in front.

* * *

By the cheerful inversion of meanings common to our language, "popular books" has come to signify light-weight fiction. Actually the classics are the really popular books. They go on selling year after year, because sooner or later everyone must possess them. Sheer force of public opinion makes it obligatory to have them in the house. They are part of respectable furnishing, and have the sterling quality that they may be bought in safety without the necessity of prior reading. There is no danger of being embarrassed by the lifted eyebrow of a bookish neighbor. But as for some of these modern books, even your closest friend won't tell you.

* * *

The reason this country has taken so kindly to being clubbed into reading is easy to see. We all like to read, if the book is right there, but very few of us care enough about it to go out and buy a book in cold blood. Also, we can enjoy the story better if the bill comes in semi-annually. We are not haunted by the ghost of our forever-expended two-fifty wavering across each page and putting us out of humor with the author and his characters. Also, reading, until the establishment of the clubs, was one of those things which as a nation we just didn't get around to. We will read almost anything the postman brings us, which proves that it is not reading we object to so much as shopping. Which also ought to prove that the responsibility of the book clubs is terrific.

There are individualists who prefer to choose their own books, just as they would rather select their own clothes. But on the other hand there are those, devoid of clothes sense, who would be grateful for a Clothes-of-the-Season Club that would send them just what they ought to wear—that is to say, just what everyone else is wearing. So, taking one thing with another and viewing the subject from all sides, we are forced to the conclusion: "What does it matter?"

The effort to bring literature into every home has been conducted mainly as an economic venture. We are told that if books can be produced cheaply enough they will be bought by everyone, which, of course, is so much gratuitous nonsense. The fact is that all normal persons glory in paying a high price for what they want. They prefer to be gouged; they boast of it. So when the

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American public becomes avid for books, books will sell instantly at any fancy price the publisher cares to ask. Those already addicted to literature rejoice in reprints and price reductions, but they are such a pitiful handful as to be scarcely an economic factor. It is the medium-brained citizen to whom the publishers must appeal. To him a book is a book, and he prefers the more expensive volumes because in this way he feels he gets more book per dollar.

Publishers and book clubs alike have been talking so confusedly about bringing books to the masses that they have let slip the main point—that the masses must first be brought to book. No amount of price-slashing is going to make this nation literary. Books at ten cents each would be too high-priced to a people that does not want them. And those already far gone in literature will manage to buy books somehow or other. This nation cannot be made two-book conscious by the simple process of cheapening the product. "It takes more than cut-price to create demand," as Adam Smith muttered on page eight-seventy-nine. Take any citizen and say to him: "Here is a novel at $2.50". Says he: "Not worth it". And he does not buy. Offer him the same thing for less, and he says: "What of it?" and does not buy.

An example of doing the right thing by the masses is found in England, where publishing virtue is anything but its own reward. In England one may find exquisite volumes for ridiculously low prices. Anyone, if price were all, could have an ample library. But where is the publishing business in England? In Jericho, absolutely. England is the classic example of the non-book-buying nation. Such of the English as can read subscribe to Mudie's. No. Price-cutting is not the answer to the book-selling problem; neither is more efficient distribution until there has been created a public to be distributed to.

The greatest fallacy about "books for all at a price for all" is this: It assumes that everyone needs books, whereas there are millions of persons in this country who have and never can have any need for books. There are many others who should never have learned to read. It has spoiled them for other careers, and led to incalculable mischief by providing an occupation for many who might otherwise be usefully employed.

Fortunately, there is for this, as for all our national problems, one sovereign remedy. The only way to promote distribution and sales and to boost prices, is to have prohibition. By this I mean absolute, nation-wide prohibition of reading. The hard classics would have to go, as also the light stimulants of new novels; a soft quarterly might be permitted, and the daily papers would have to guarantee that they contained less than one-tenth of one percent literature. They seem even to have anticipated this ruling in many cases, a straw which should indicate that presently there will be a wind blowing.

As a means of making every citizen avid for a book at no matter what price, there seems nothing more sound. Soon we must prohibit automobiles because they are misused by so large a percentage of the general public; what with petting and travelling salesmen, and downright pedestrian slaughter, it is high time these engines of destruction were removed from the highways. But deadly as they are in the hands of incompetents, the radius of danger is more or less circumscribed. It is nothing to the incalculable damage which may result from putting pen to paper.

Think of the breach-of-promise case and its letters, think of libel suits, think of popular novels—think of anything, and you will see that reading is the most deadly because the most insidious of menaces to the youth of our great country. Writing is no less dangerous, particularly with schools of journalism and commercial writing-courses daily infecting the more ambitious young people. The lure of the pen is subtle, especially in

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cases where the weakness is hereditary; and the impulse to commit fiction easily becomes uncontrollable. There may be a writer in your town at this moment, and from him the contagion may spread. Your own boy or girl may fall victim. And once they have tasted literature, particularly in its creative aspect, they may become addicts. Could there be a more cogent argument in favor of prohibition of literature?

The possibilities of such prohibition are endless. There would be a system of fines and imprisonments (*a*) for being in possession of a book; (*b*) for carrying, transporting or otherwise moving books; (*c*) for selling or in any manner disposing of books; (*d*) for reading of concealed books. All this may seem fantastic, but it is not so many years since prohibition in any form was considered preposterous. What is sauce for the toper should be sauce for the reader.

Our federal government has already taken the first step toward this goal in its annual comic supplement, the Income Tax Sheet. According to this document, a novelist who has been so sufficiently misguided as to write a book and perpetrate sales thereof is charged for his royalties as *unearned* income. Here is a strong blow struck in favor of the cause of total abstinence from authorship; prohibition of reading would naturally follow. There is no need to labor the argument or dilate upon the dry humor of our government. In this ruling it merely indicates once more that things that are impossible are equal to one another.

If in the course of this brief survey I have failed to make clear this, that, and the other, I shall have attained my object, for there is almost nothing so difficult as being dogmatic upon a subject regarding which one has not made up one's mind.

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# JOHN DRYDEN: 1631-1931

*by W. L. MacDonald*

## I. THE CRITIC'S POET

THREE centuries have passed since Dryden was born, and for a large part of that period he has been buried, to use Lowell's dismal trope, more thoroughly than most writers in "that great cemetery of the British Poets". Whereas in the last hundred years Defoe's memory has been honored with a dozen biographies, more than a century has elapsed since Dryden's Life has been adequately written. The fact is that John Dryden is now popularly known as the author of a single poem—*Alexander's Feast*. This statement, so obviously wrong to readers even moderately conversant with literature, is just as obviously true if the proper meaning of "popularity" is insisted upon. Ask the average business or professional man what Dryden wrote and, after recalling all that he can of his high school reading, he may be able to give the title of the greater of the two Cecilian Odes. Of course if the question should happen to be directed to a university graduate, one who has been exposed to the masterpieces of English literature in a "survey" course, the same answer might conceivably be supplemented by a few other titles, *Absalom and Achitophel* and *MacFlecknoe* perhaps, while *All for Love* and *The Hind and the Panther* might be hinted at in a vaguely descriptive way. But ask him a few further questions of a more specific nature and it is altogether likely that the graduate also will soon fall back upon the poem he read with attention and interest before matriculation. J. Churton Collins has said of *Absalom and Achitophel* that no poem of our language has been more enjoyed by succeeding generations of readers. The truth of the statement is questionable on all grounds, but it is simply wrong unless specific qualifications be attached to the last word of his utterance.

Now *Alexander's Feast* is a magnificent *tour de force*. The rest of Dryden's lyrical efforts are inconsiderable in bulk and give him no claim to a distinguished place in the annals of English literature. One who knows only the poem which Macaulay calls "the noblest ode in the language" knows very little of Dryden. The case is far different with almost every other great English poet. Any one of a dozen of *The Canterbury Tales*, even the *Prologue*, may be said fairly to represent Chaucer. *The Rape of the Lock* displays the particular bent of Pope's genius, *To a Skylark* Shelley's, and one who has read but a few of the ordinary schoolbook selections of Wordsworth has the flavor of the best he has written. But what relation is there between the great Cecilian Ode and Dryden's satires, didactic poems, and his plays? For that matter there is little in *Alexander's Feast* to suggest the ode to the memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew, which Johnson praised as "undoubtedly the noblest ode that our language ever has produced". As for the



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songs in the plays, however fresh and competent, they are, generally speaking, much more interesting to the historian of English prosody than significant in the national current of lyrical poetry.

The fact is that Dryden is not a popular poet. On the other hand he is not, in spite of what Mr. Van Doren says, a poet's poet. There is little evidence of his direct influence on later poets excepting Pope. Dryden probably had more to do with the forming of Pope's style than any other single writer, but once Pope's dominance was established, it was to him rather than to Dryden that contemporary and later writers owned their allegiance. This was of course natural. What an aspiring poet would expect to gain from studying the work of an acknowledged master would be some insight into his methods. The larger sweep, the bolder design, the superior powers of Dryden were not matters for imitation. His technique, refined to elegance in Pope's hands, its frequent clumsiness taught to glide gracefully, its agile strength brought under complete control, was just what the novice would emulate. Unquestionably Pope the technician is a much surer and safer model than Dryden. He *is* Dryden thoroughly methodized. Pope was the exemplar for most of the eighteenth century, and when his influence waned it was not towards Dryden that versifiers, not to say poets, turned for guidance. A century after Dryden's death few poets besides Scott and Byron could speak of the old satirist with respect or even patience. Among the Romantics the question was whether Dryden and Pope ought to be called poets, and the question is still a moot point in undergraduate discussion. In the poetry of our own century it would be difficult to establish any direct influence of Dryden at all.

All this does not mean that poets have regarded Dryden with indifference. For the past two hundred years most English poets have taken occasion to sing his praises. In the eighteenth century the chorus was practically in unison; Scott and Byron in the nineteenth and T. S. Eliot in the twentieth have paid homage to his name. But these men of letters have spoken as critics; they have not, fortunately, paid the highest compliment of imitation.

Dryden, it seems, is the poet especially beloved of the critic and the literary historian, and an obvious reason is that he is so thoroughly representative of an age. The period of his activity coincides almost exactly with the era when English literature was changing its rather threadbare and somewhat antiquated clothing, a family inheritance from Elizabethan and Jacobean times, and was gradually acquiring a garb of more modern style, as well as a taste for new clothes in general. In this age of transition Milton was a lonely figure. While exhibiting many of the qualities of the older period, he showed many new tendencies of a very individualistic bent; but his new ways did not lead in the direction the new age was taking. Dryden, on the other hand, is in nearly every way representative of his age. He was interested in every thing which engaged the attention of his generation—science, politics, the church, the theatre, poetry—and his literary work at once bears ample testimony to that interest and exhibits all the good qualities of form and expression in a higher degree than that of any of his contemporaries. This is the secret of Dryden's popularity with the critics. In thorough sympathy with his era, he grew with it or, rather, slightly in advance of it. He not only represented his age but conducted it along the way it wished to travel; and for the Restoration the horizon lay before and not behind.

Like the rest of his generation, Dryden was convinced that the future held the promise of better things than the past had ever achieved. When the men of the Restoration looked backward, the vista which first met their view was the dreary waste of the Commonwealth with all its strife, repression, hypocrisy; beyond that lay another dismal ex-

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panse of war and decadence. It is small wonder, then, that the glorious age of Elizabeth looked distant and distorted, and that the eyes of the Restoration and Revolution were turned resolutely to the present and future. With his wider vision and larger sympathy Dryden could contemplate with admiration and reverence the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and much more distant prospects, but on the whole his interests also were emphatically of his age. And as he always felt a little surer of the way than the rest, he was able to guide contemporary effort as no other man of his generation.

Yet, apart from the conviction he must have had of superior critical and creative powers, until he was well advanced towards the position he ultimately held, Dryden seemed hardly aware that he was a leader. In fact it is well known that circumstances worked as strongly as conscious effort in making Dryden the supreme poet of his day. At the beginning of his career he imitated his contemporaries in the so-called graces of style which belong to the metaphysical poets in order to get a hearing in the world of letters; financial difficulties forced him into play-writing, special political and ecclesiastical considerations called forth his great satirical and so-called religious poems, and the Revolution forced him into the comparative seclusion which brought forth *Virgil* and the *Fables*. But he gave his age better plays on the whole than anyone else, and without any cavil of a doubt he wrote the best Prologues and Epilogues of his own generation at least. When he took in hand to satirize his own particular enemies and those of the government he produced what most critics are agreed in calling the best political and the best personal satire in the language. Whatever reservations are made on the score of the two theological pieces, they must be recognized as representative of two types of thought which were vigorously operative, not to say militant, in that generation. Apart altogether from the prestige which their author's name has given them, it is no more than just to say that they are without a rival in English verse of that particular kind. The *Virgil* in Dryden's day surpassed, as a narrative English poem at least, any other verse translation of the Classics, and has held a high reputation down to our own time.* The *Fables*—that part at least which represents Chaucer—perhaps more than anything else Dryden wrote mark him as a guide unerring in his instinct for what is best in English poetry. Dryden's critical prose not only far surpassed other critical writings of the period in range, method, style and in its judgments, but it has stood the test of time to such an extent that as prose and criticism it holds an honored place even in the twentieth century. And yet it belongs to its own time. *The Essay of Dramatic Poesy,* which may be regarded as typical of Dryden's critical performance, as Scott pointed out, focused attention upon the discussions of stage matters which were exercising the dramatic circles of London at the time it was written. And one of the most remarkable things about it is the resolute way in which the author, after making out the best case possible for the drama of the former ages, turns his face towards the modern plays.

In a few instances, of course, Dryden does not represent the best opinion of his day. His judgment of Waller and Cowley are cases in point, but as regards one of these we know that he lived long enough to outgrow his earlier impressions. He interested himself to some effect in the scientific movement which issued in the foundation of the Royal Society, but so strongly did the orthodox beliefs of his day hold him that even in his last years he cast the horologue of his son Charles, and boasted that generally his predictions, based on astrological methods, fell shrewdly to the purpose. The immorality

* It is more than probable that the alleged popularity of Chapman's *Homer* is mainly due to the popularity of Keats's ode.

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of his dramas places him in one respect merely on a level with the playwrights of his day, but, unlike the other chief offenders, he abstained from rebuttal of Collier's censure and chose rather to cry "*peccavi*".

These are some of the reasons which have endeared Dryden to the historians of English literature. He is easily and unequivocally "placed"; even the dates of his entry into the field and of his death conveniently mark the beginning and the end of an era. The *Heroic Stanzas* on the death of Cromwell in 1658 is a chronological link with the older puritan period. The *Astraea Redux* of 1660 ushers in the Restoration, and when the poet dies in 1700 the beginning of a new era is confirmed by the composition—if we may accept the author's word—of Pope's earliest published poem. The age of modern English literature has begun.

Not only the historians but critics in the ordinary sense have all been partial to John Dryden. Contemporary critics were unanimous in their admiration of his great gifts. Even Blackmore, who had been castigated to annihilation in Dryden's last great prose essay, agreed that when the dross of Dryden's work was purged away the residue was pure gold. Pope's eulogy of "the long majestic march, and energy sublime" is famous. In the *Progress of Poetry* Gray placed him after Milton in the pageant of English poetry; Johnson, Scott, Byron over a century ago, and Van Doren, Eliot and Nicoll in our own day, have augmented the chorus. Even Wordsworth recognized his ardor and impetuosity, and Macaulay, whose denunciations were directed against the man and his life—and his Tory principles—rather than the poet, even Macaulay remarks that "of lyric poets he is, if not the most sublime, the most brilliant and spirit-stirring". Lowell's comment, already noted, is probably just, but at any rate Lowell has him buried among the English classics. None of the significant critics speaks in terms of unqualified eulogy of Dryden, but all estimate what is good in him as far outweighing whatever may call for disapprobation; in fact all contrive to place the poet's work among the best that English literature has to offer.

## II. THE HONEST TURNCOAT

In the three centuries which have passed since Dryden was born, the poet achieved his triumphs, the world duly applauded, and, recognizing his greatness, placed him on the shelf along with his peers, to share with them the dust of honorable neglect. In the tercentenary of his birth it is fitting to inquire once more what the essential qualities are, not as a poet merely but also as a man and a writer, which have made him a vital force in literature for almost three centuries. On the assumption that Dryden is not a popular writer—an assumption that requires no further argument to support it—some of the main features of his life may be summarized with advantage.

John Dryden was born on August 9, 1631. He was descended, on both his father's and mother's side, from ancient puritan families which, in the struggles between the early Stuarts and Parliament, sided with the latter against the Monarchy. The debt of loyalty which was owing to such descent he liquidated by an elegy on the death of Cromwell, and within two years he had announced himself as a candidate for the favor of the Cavalier Court by publishing another poem, *Astraea Redux*. Membership in the Royal Society and the Laureateship, both of which came to him in the next decade, are at once evidence that his offerings were acceptable to the Court and testimony to at least a superficial interest in matters which excited the intellectual curiosity of his generation. A long series of plays, usually characterized then as now by the word "indecent", but which on the whole delighted the unregenerate audiences of that period, is a further evidence of Dryden's sympathy with the fashions of his own day. But of course he transcended popu-

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lar taste in what concerned his own art. One of the more obvious indications of this superiority is the fact that he developed to its highest perfection the "Heroic" play, a type of drama which flourished during the Restoration, and that he outgrew the absurdity within little more than a decade. Loyalty to the Court called for the great satires upon which his fame chiefly rests, *Absalom and Achitophel, The Medal,* and *MacFlecknoe.* The same loyalty is probably responsible for the *Religio Laici,* an exposition of his own ecclesiastical belief in the Anglican system, which then maintained at Court. The question whether *The Hind and the Panther,* written in support of the religion of Rome (which he "adopted" shortly after the accession of the Catholic James II), was the sincere expression of a new convert's religious belief, or whether it was prompted by anxiety for the author's standing at Court, is an unsolved problem. At any rate Dryden remained true to Catholicism when the Revolution came, and of course lost the Laureateship. In the last decade of his life, Dryden's genius blossomed for a second harvest. Remote from the fields of controversy in which his heart delighted and in which his satiric powers had come to full maturity, he devoted his robust energy chiefly to that series of translations from the ancient and medieval classics which show how nearly akin was his Muse to that of Virgil and Ovid, of Chaucer and Boccaccio. And the immediate reward for all his service to letters was the veneration, not to say the adoration, of the company of wits and writers who used to assemble at Will's coffee-house to hear him talk and to share the honor of a pinch from Dryden's snuff-box.

Considering what a dark cloud of calumny hung over the poet in his own day owing to his apostasy from so many causes, we must conclude that the term "glorious John" had its origin in a conviction that he was sincere at heart. The fact seems to be that Dryden grew steadily as he matured, and that maturity in his case was reached only about the time of his death. Croce tells in his *Autobiography* the process of his own mental and spiritual development, how each stage was reached only after bitter struggle, and how almost before he could get the conclusion of one book well off his hands doubts had arisen, new problems were springing up out of the old, so that what appeared to be a state of conviction was only a partial understanding or rather misunderstanding, and became merely the starting point for another advance. Croce states this to be the normal process of arriving at truth or as near truth as we are ever permitted to reach. Such a theory throws light upon the subject of Dryden's development. The elements of growth were all present in abundance. His was a robust, vigorous nature with an enormous capacity for assimilation, and when these two qualities unite in the same person there is bound to be growth. Furthermore his mind was of that positive, assertive type which is unhappy until it has formulated its convictions in direct statement. But no sooner is a position announced than it begins to disintegrate under the impact of new ideas. A new *credo* is soon demanded and so the process goes on, each step being in the line of advance, each new position a little more tenable because commanding a wider field of vision. One other quality Dryden possessed which acted in close concert with his assimilative faculty, and that was his willingness to concede in discussion. Concession in an unassertive person is apt to be at once a sign and a source of weakness. But Dryden could concede even in his most vigorous satires without fear of his main shaft missing its target. The lines in praise of Shaftesbury as Lord Chancellor, inserted in the second edition of *Absalom and Achitophel,* constitute perhaps the most striking case in point. But though the satirist has thus relieved the swarthiness of Achitophel's character he leaves us in no doubt that the arch-contriver's spiritual complexion is emphatically swart.

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Instances of this urbane gesture occur in most of his writings. *The Essay of Dramatic Poesy* is largely made up of concessions to the other side—the "Dialogue" form made that necessary—without any diminution of the force with which the author's own views are maintained.

Whether this is a true account of the process by which Dryden developed in the certitude of his powers is unimportant so long as the fact of his growth is clearly kept in mind. But one who is constantly revising his opinions on all sorts of questions lays himself open to the charge of trimming, especially when, as in Dryden's case, it is possible to point to personal gain as a reason for apostasy. The occasions on which Dryden shifted his ground were so numerous, and the questions at issue so important, that the scrutiny of this phase of the poet's life has always been a source of satisfaction to his enemies and anxiety to his friends. To approximate truth in this matter, it would seem to be a reasonable and, on the whole, a just procedure to adjudicate upon the poet's major tergiversations in the light of many instances in which the change of opinion was obviously sincere—the result of normal development in a mind where all the elements of vigorous growth were present. In the inquiry we must of course be candid and follow the example which the poet himself has given of conceding points where the evidence justifies concession. The final judgment we should expect to be far short of certainty, far short of a triumphant vindication; but we might at least look for a fair and generous acquittal.

As has been already said, in an age when opinion on most matters was unsettled, Dryden held and expressed positive views; he renounced these views frequently for new ones, and where his opinions had to do with literature his later judgments were always sounder than his earlier. He never seems to have revised his first opinion of Waller and Denham, but his admiration for Cowley, the "darling" of his youth, suffers some abatement in the Preface of the *Fables*. At one time he failed to appreciate Otway's true worth, but later did him full amends. Though he had gone on record early as being an admirer of the great Elizabethans, he had shown a strong tendency to dwell upon their shortcomings, probably, as Scott conjectures, because of a sincere preference for the moderns, perhaps because he was a young man defending a dangerous position. But in his later utterances he renders the homage due to greatness. Before examining the next obvious case in point—the revision of his settled opinion of the superiority of rhyme over blank verse, an instance at once so typical and significant that it deserves a more detailed treatment—the two major retractations of his career must be reviewed: the "conversions" which constitute the chief embarrassment for those who wish to make out a clean bill of health for the poet.

Few of Dryden's contemporaries were willing to look upon his apostasy from Puritanism to Anglicanism, from the Roundheads to the Cavaliers, as a case of normal development; still fewer could view with tolerance his second, more flagrant, apostasy from Anglicanism to Catholicism. In *The Medal* occurs this couplet:

> The reason's obvious: *int'rest never lies,*
> The most have still their int'rest in their eyes.

Now the point upon which Dryden's enemies rested their grudge was that the poet's interest in each case prompted his defection from a losing cause. Macaulay has emphasized this obvious inference for the nineteenth century. The Laureateship, not to speak of other, perhaps less tangible, advantages, would have been out of his reach had he not forsaken the declining fortunes of Puritanism. The Laureateship—and the stipend—would have taken wings along with the favor of the Court had he not abandoned Protestantism with the accession of James II. While not losing sight of the probability that

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his private interest was a strong incentive to change his mind in both instances, most modern critics, notably Sir Walter, make out a case that does little damage to Dryden's reputation for honesty. The first of these conversions doesn't really cause us much trouble. Dryden, a young man without any puritanical bent and probably without any strong feeling for Puritanism, with the majority of the nation left the party of usurpation and repression and gladly welcomed the return of the Monarchy and gaiety. But the offence of apostasy to Rome was aggravated by the fact that he had recently written the *Religio Laici* upholding the thesis that Anglicanism is a better "religion" than any other. Scott argues that the principles upheld in *The Hind and the Panther* are no more than an extension of the doctrines announced in the earlier poem. "Dryden, when he wrote the *Religio Laici* was under the impulse of the same conviction, which further prosecuted, led him to acquiesce in the faith of Rome." If Sir Walter's conclusion is sound, Dryden's development here offers a curious parallel to that of Newman and many of the other Tractarians, not to speak of numerous instances in our own day of Anglicans, about whose honesty of mind there is really no question, finding spiritual peace in the doctrines of Rome. Scott concludes finally that interest and conviction led in the same direction, and such a judgment the reader is free to interpret with generosity or cynicism according as he is well or ill disposed towards the poet. One point which seems to be generally neglected in this connection is that Dryden's so-called "religion"—at least as far as can be gathered from the two poems—was very much an affair of the head; neither the *Religio* nor the *Hind* affords much evidence that the author had religious convictions of any kind when he wrote them, whatever his theological views might be. Newman truly observed that no man will be a martyr for a syllogism. Dryden may have thought that martyrdom, even one which was far short of the stake, was too great a price to pay for a mere theological principle. There is no room for doubt that Dryden was, like so many others in his generation, a time-server. The tone of cringing adulation in many of his dedications, his proneness to laud the virtues of those who were in favor at Court, and to be reticent about their faults, afford abundant evidence of the unpleasant truth. On the whole, the argument for sincerity is stressed almost to breaking point; and yet Dryden was obviously a sincere Catholic towards the end of his life. The letter to Mrs. Stewart* has the ring of truth, and it would appear that Dryden might have made terms with the Revolution.

Before closing the case for the defence one further exhibit must be produced as evidence of Dryden's essential honesty. As has already been said, his conversion from Rhyme to Blank Verse is typical and significant, more significant perhaps than any of his other recantations since it affected the poet in that aspect which was of paramount interest to him—his art. Here there can be no question of sincerity. There was nothing to be gained by the change of opinion and a chance of losing some of his popularity. The process of apostasy from the prevailing taste for rhyme was gradual, and illustrates the Crocean doctrine better than any other instance. In the Preface to the *Rival Ladies* in 1664 he argued for rhyme in tragedy against blank verse. In the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, 1668, he still insists that rhyme is better, but his conviction is not so strongly anchored, for he points out that blank verse is subject to the same objections as rhyme. Yet—and here is where his ability to concede in argument is significant of a disintegration in his main position—he allows that blank verse may be used in tragedy. Next, in the Preface to *The State of Innocence*, 1674, he is giving unstinted praise to Milton's blank verse, and when he writes *Aureng-Zebe*, 1675, he frankly

* Malone's *Dryden*, Vol. I, Part 1, p. 92.

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confesses in the Prologue that he is tired of his "long-loved mistress rhyme" and the many cases of *enjambement*, "the rattling of the fetters" as Scott aptly observed, indicate that the new idea is becoming operative. Three years later, forgetful of popular taste and prejudice, and thinking only to please himself, he writes *All For Love* in blank verse. This is a new conviction reached after toilsome effort in the face of popular opinion, and apparently against the known preference of the Royal patron.

Such evidence of sincerity should have very considerable weight, especially when the evidence on the other side is circumstantial rather than positive. With such evidence before them some of the best judges have pronounced for the defendant on the basis of mere justice or equity. But in any case the generous course is to give Dryden the benefit of the doubt and to acquit him of the charge of being a mere time-server, even in the two glaring cases of apostasy.

So Dryden grew. Within the long space of more than fifty years he advanced from the timid, embarrassed poetaster who employed his halting verses as a vehicle for disgusting conceits in fancied imitation of the metaphysical poets, to the old veteran of letters who wrote with ease and assurance the magnificent cadences of the Cecilian and Killigrew odes, and the short devastating phrases by which alone posterity retains the memory of Milbourn and Blackmore. In the final scene he sits enthroned by the fire or on the balcony at Will's ordaining laws for the realm of literature, and ever "the readiest to help the young and deserving". We can imagine him discoursing, rather haltingly, with wise tolerance on the subject which most interested his little court; endearing himself to them by his large-hearted sympathy, not boring and exasperating his listeners by arguing every triviality for fear of being convicted of an oversight, but rather with a large benevolence conceding virtue even to his enemies and recognizing promise even in the jejune performances of the tyros of poetry; never damning with faint praise and never patronizing where all were his recognized inferiors; but while bestowing here the meed of commendation and suggesting there the wise direction, always having in reserve the comprehensive generalization, the authoritative pronouncement which determines the question at issue without antagonizing, because it is unanswerably right. It must have been some such demeanor which earned for Dryden in his last days the affectionate sobriquet of "glorious John".

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# WHY NOT ESPERANTO?

*by Janet Rankin Aiken*

I WROTE an article, "English Over the World", for the September BOOKMAN. Tiny though the thing was, very soon the evidences began to come in—evidences of the desperate interest people take in this question of what language the babies of the future shall hear and learn.

There was the man planning the world-wide distribution of certain English books, and would I discuss with him the merits of his project? His was the commercial touch, and I evaded it.

There was the woman who admitted that English was all right, if it was pure English; but—*quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*—my own English was unfortunately defective in a number of particulars, which she proceeded to particularize. That game is too easy. I can play it myself with my own writings or those of anyone you can name. We all have sinned and come short of the glory of our speech.

And then, thirdly, there was the Esperantist. He wrote full five beautifully typed sheets telling me about Esperanto and World Peace, Esperanto and Logic, Esperanto and Linguistic Simplicity. And he ended with the very friendly offer of an Esperanto grammar for my leisure hours.

My attitude toward Esperanto is one of friendly ignorance. That fact, I hold, makes me peculiarly fitted to discuss this or the other synthetic languages which modern civilization has evoked. The train of reasoning is that of a Commission of the Illinois State Legislature some years since. Charged with the duty of investigating women's working hours, this commission stipulated that no one of the investigators it employed should have learned anything about women's working hours and thus have lost his open-mindedness. We were a queer lot of investigators, but we did a pretty good job. Much the same comment, I hope, will be earned by the forthcoming remarks on Esperanto.

I use the name Esperanto in a broad sense to signify the Synthetic Language in general. Since as I believe it is the most prominent one of them all, this seems a legitimate procedure. If you prefer, you may read instead Volapuk, Ido, or that one you yourself invented or thought of inventing.

For there is nothing more universal than the instinctive tendency to tinker with language. All children have at some time tried out a dog-Latin of their own or their playmates. We have all tried new ways of writing the old letters. The Esperanto tendency is strong in all of us, only usually we must be children and it must be a personal Esperanto of our own to bring forth the most pronounced manifestations of the passion. The Esperantist carries the passion into maturity.

That was almost a digression. But while we are getting under way, let us decide to consider Esperanto the ideal, and not Esperanto the probably defective. It is so piti-



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fully easy to pick flaws in anything of human origin. One could no doubt find many individual faults in any synthetic speech; but we shall not play that game, nor the game of those who ridicule the Esperantists themselves, their cockfight Congresses and their *inter-se* disagreements generally. That turning of the argument from the fact to the men, from alcohol to the enforcement officer, from religion to its exponents, is even easier than the picking of flaws, and even more pitiable. Let us state our question—Is Esperanto more practical than English for world use?—and then let us confine the discussion to that question.

Now the term *world language*: does it mean the actual or the auxiliary speech of the world? It doesn't matter. English is a good language for actual world use—not merely as an auxiliary to other dialects.

In this respect I go further than my unknown Esperantist friend, who is careful to say that he does not intend to force the nations of the world to forego their present idioms, but merely to learn Esperanto besides. Me, I direct the peoples of the world to assume English, altogether casting off their old linguistic garments. Why not? If English is good at all, isn't it good for that? I cannot understand why the same reasoning should not hold for Esperanto. I think I shall assume that it does. Anyhow, it would be inevitable. When Esperanto is fully established as the language of international communication, it will be bound to worm its way into the parlor, the dining-room and the nursery.

Now let us run over the arguments for preferring Esperanto to English. Let the Esperantist speak for himself, and let us all the time preserve the open-mindedness of innocence.

"Dr. Zamenhof, the creator of Esperanto, in his study of various European tongues, was amazed by the comparative simplicity of the English grammar. He realized, however, that its endless contradictions and exceptions had no place in a language designed for international use and he succeeded in condensing his grammar into sixteen simple rules with no exceptions. He adopted the English sentence order as the most natural; due however to a distinctive ending for the accusative case it is possible to arrange the words in almost any order and still have complete understanding. This advantage will be appreciated more readily by those to whom our sentence order is anything but simple because in their own language they have come to know an order which is radically different."

Now this is a large claim for Esperanto, and very nearly makes me join the army of detractors. How a language can retain and yet resign a fixed sentence order beats me. But let us assume that it is so, and go on.

"In Esperanto every word is pronounced exactly as it is written, and the accent is always on the penultimate syllable. Thus the countless hours of study necessary to acquire a knowledge of the correct spelling of many of our commonly used English words can in the case of Esperanto be devoted to the study of the language itself. Add to this the fact that the student is never in doubt as to the correct pronunciation of a word and it is easy to see why it is possible to make such rapid progress. A rule once learned never has to be unlearned."

This is possible. Spanish and Russian, among natural languages, have a fairly phonetic alphabet and spelling. Why? Because their written language is only about five or six centuries old, and the alphabet hasn't had time to get out of order. I wonder what five hundred years and a hundred nationalties of users would do for the Esperanto alphabet? But at least this feature of Esperanto is at present possible and good. What next?

"The vocabulary consists of less than one thousand fundamental words; all other words are international in character with only such changes as are required to maintain the regularity of spelling and grammar.

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Most of these international words are to be found in English. In spite of its exceedingly small vocabulary Esperanto possesses a richness of expression which compares most favorably with any of the modern languages. Why? Because it is possible through the use of the prefixes and suffixes, each of which has a defined and constant meaning, to form from a single root a whole series of related words."

This reminds me of my old favorite among languages, Hebrew. The basic vocabulary of Biblical Hebrew is indeed very small, only a few thousand words, but grammatical manipulation and figurative use make out of those few words a magnificent linguistic capital. Why not Esperanto?

Indeed, thus far Esperanto has things all its own way. There is no reason why it should not be possible to build a practical language nearer to the mind's desire than is English or even Hebrew. There is no reason why the "endless contradictions and exceptions" of English should not be eliminated in such an ideal speech, no reason why modern scientific methods should not supersede the slow process of centuries in maturing and simplifying a speech for nations.

Then shall we write away for that Esperanto grammar? Shall we order the world to go Esperanto, and await the inevitable results in world peace and speech heaven?

No, not quite yet. Let us first consider two other quotations from the Esperantist's letter. In five typed pages a person is very apt to answer his own contentions, for good or evil, and I think this is precisely what we have here. First, the letter speaks of "the obstinate refusal of many scholars and educators to grant Esperanto a hearing". Now we have decided to forego personal detractions, and so we shall skip that word *obstinate*. Why do so many scholars and educators, as well as so many plain people like you and me, refuse to give Esperanto a hearing?

There may be many reasons, but one, to my mind, lies beneath them all. It is the innate distrust of the human mind for any form of life which is not basically a product of the collective intelligence. That statement probably needs elucidation, which I shall proceed to give.

First, language is a form of life. There is probably no human institution which is so close to our life as our language. It is closer than government, religion, or marriage, with all of which institutions it may be legitimately compared.

Now modern civilization has evoked synthetic forms of government, religion, and marriage, as well as language. And some of these—for example, Socialism—have had astounding growth, rightly or wrongly as you may prefer to say. But it is notable that Socialism never has a chance. Whenever it gets in the saddle, it either becomes something else, or else it does not arrive. Companionate marriage? Bolshevism? They are at their best as leavens, leavening the old lump. None has a chance of becoming the lump itself.

English is a product of the collective intelligence of the English-speaking peoples, and I believe that it is an excellent product, and that there is no better linguistic institution in common use today. And as a product of the collective intelligence I believe it will win ten foreign converts where Esperanto will win one. Underneath all motives of profit, popularity, politics and propaganda, the irreducible fact remains that as a natural product English is acceptable, as a synthetic product Esperanto is taboo. It may be a leaven—I hope it will be so; it may be a religion of the comparatively few. But "so many educators and scholars" as well as the mass of plain folk, will pass it by. There is my conviction against Esperanto, and my reason for not mastering its grammar and telling the world to do so likewise.

I have not quoted the most interesting thing in the Esperantist's letter. Here it is:

"Admitting that the simplification of English forms has progressed to a point far be-

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yond that attained by any other language, would not the advantages thus derived add force to the arguments of those who would carry this simplification to its logical conclusion through the elimination of the countless irregularities in which the language still abounds? If this were to happen, could English, as we know it and speak it, hold its own in competition with an international English ruthlessly stripped by its users of every non-essential detail to fit their conception of a world language as the simplest possible means of communication?"

Now let me interpret: he means that some day some one may make a pidgin English, or better, an Esperantist English, stripped of all its dear illogicalities for the purpose of world communication. And how shall we like that? Will it be pleasant to see English jazzed into usableness for foreign trade, diplomacy, and so on, with the tongue of Shakespeare and the Bible bleeding in the background? Why, say I, speed that day? The tongue of Shakespeare already lies bleeding by the improvements the last three centuries have witnessed. If by competition with Esperanto, or by any other means, English can be moulded into a better instrument, let it be done. Tinker by all means. Improve by all means. But improve or not, let the world speak English.

(And, by the way, the Esperantist asks if my sense of fair play can contemplate dispassionately the handicap suffered by foreign diplomats forced to use English. It certainly can. Right or wrong, I think the English-speaking people, with all their drawbacks, are the least unsafe to be entrusted with the welfare of the world. If this be Kipling, make the most of it.)

Imagine Esperanto accepted. That phonetic alphabet would begin to sprout local pronunciations on every doorstep. That sentence order would suffer astonishing sea-changes. The collective intelligence would have its innings, and, when it was through, World Esperanto might look like British Socialism and Russian Communism.

Now it is all out. I have knocked down the hornet's nest and I had better run, for no one is going to like this article, least of all the Esperantist, whose reprisals I positively shudder to think of. All I can say is that I nail my flag to the mast of the collective intelligence of the English-speaking peoples, and order the world to rally there. If you don't like it, just give the world a different rallying order. I don't mind.

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# ARCHIBALD MACLEISH: AN APPRECIATION

*by George Dangerfield*

THE publication of *New Found Land* early in 1930 was an event of the first importance, both as regards a certain aspect in the development of modern American poetry which one might call the revival of the Anglo-Saxon tradition, and as marking a half-way stage in MacLeish's progress towards the articulation of a major poetry. In attempting a discussion of the first one feels more than ever a need for that solid, just and prosaic attitude towards the correct use of words which was so peculiarly the property of eighteenth-century criticism, for the discussion must eventually resolve itself into an analysis of the use of words. "Anglo-Saxon tradition", of course, is a vague and unsatisfactory term; it requires a precise, and I fear perhaps a tedious, definition; and one has to begin this definition with the elimination of the pure pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon poetry, which was in truth rather poor hide-bound stuff. It was after an obscure and difficult survival among the northern parts of England that it suddenly appeared, very much changed for the better, in the body of fourteenth-century Middle English alliterative verse—a body which produced, amid a great deal of indifferent and slipshod work, some of the most vigorous passages in the history of English poetry. At the end of the century its peculiar vigor and, I think, its peculiar beauty disappeared altogether; and now after a lapse of many hundreds of years it is to be found again in twentieth-century American poetry, where its modern inheritor—such as MacLeish—is always using his words in precisely the same way that the fourteenth-century poet, at his best, could use *his* words. There is in both the same approach to the word, the same entering into the old and vital being of the word, which, though it is primarily instinctive and not acquired, is in the end only given to a poet who is thoroughly practised in his craft. We shall never understand the workings of poetic tradition, of which poets themselves are only the instruments. In this case something that disappeared six hundred years ago has appeared again; we can observe but we cannot explain it. In the last century, of course, the sign had already arisen in the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins, who consciously fetched his prosody from *Piers Plowman*, but who in his later and more typical poetry elaborated his line in a way impossible and alien to the Middle English tradition. (And Hopkins is a very great and a very solitary figure in British poetry: he has no direct descendants in England and only an indirect influence.) At any rate we cannot consider MacLeish's position in the development of modern American poetry without insisting upon this "Anglo-Saxon" element. It is at the very heart of such a typical phrase as

deeper than clouds are
Down or the underneath wings of the gulls go:



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and for the purposes of a more exact comparison there is a single line from "Immortal Autumn"—

Or winter yet weigh all with silence the pine bough.

Consider the unity of sound and sense: the weight and distribution of the words: and how each separate word has been given a full value. And then compare it with this single line from that great and anonymous fourteenth-century poem *Gawayne And The Greene Knight*—

"Now iwysse," quod Wowayn, "wysty is here."

"It is desolate here". . . . We may have to go to a glossary for the sense, but the sound is inevitable; and again there is the proper distribution of words, the full meaning given to the word, the careful balance of vowel and consonant. The line is beautiful poetry because it is right . . . it *is* the desolation of the valley of the Green Chapel, where Gawayne expected to meet his death. In vocabulary and technique the poet of the twentieth century has a six-hundred year advantage: the fourteenth-century poet needs a careful and devoted reading. But the *likeness* in the use of words, in the *feeling* for words, is exact and unmistakable; it is of the utmost importance in this stage of the history of American poetry; and MacLeish, though not the only exponent of it, is certainly the clearest.

It is here that one is disposed to quarrel with that very misguided statement that MacLeish is "Elizabethan" in his use of words—(a statement that might be applied to E. E. Cummings, who has had a wide, salutary, and generally unacknowledged influence, and who, though not a major poet, is far ahead of his time). For the Elizabethan word was capable of a great variety of meaning, and susceptible to a great deal of experiment; and that is one of the reasons why so many indifferent poets of the time can surprise us with verses of a subtle and almost inexplicable charm. But the words of the fourteenth-century poet were often to disappear altogether from the language, or to creep northwards into fifteenth-century Scottish poetry, or to linger on into our time as a pale shadow of themselves; they were words which, for a sensitive writer, had an old and a full meaning; and that is why a poet like the poet of *Gawayne* could, in spite of the harshness and uncertainty of Middle English as a whole, still write in his most creative moments a clear, conscious, and full poetry. And that is why MacLeish in this century can be said to carry on the Middle English tradition; he is not creating a new poetic language but re-creating an old one—which is one of the ways in which poetry is constantly keeping itself alive. He is always approaching nearer to the full *being* of the word, penetrating the word; and he, far more than almost any other poet today, appears at times to be fully conscious of the word as an ancient, mysterious, and living entity.

## II

It is my certain belief that Archibald MacLeish is one of the few contemporary poets, whether in America or England, who seem to be capable of achieving a major poetry. For not only are there at least the *intimations* of major poetry, in a great deal of his work, but he has written in "Immortal Autumn" the most beautiful single poem of his generation. It is a completely relevant poem, in the sense that from the first word to the last not one is out of place, or unnecessary, or weak. To quote from it would be to do it violence: but certainly both for its formal relevance, and for the imagination which fills it with a sharp, spacious, and insistent meaning, it is a great poem. There is evidence of a less sustained, more occasional, but at the same time more detached and objective imagination, which is embodied in a whole imagery, but not as yet in a complete poem.—

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And here face down beneath the sun
And here upon earth's noonward height
To feel the always coming on
The always rising of the night

To feel creep up the curving east
The earthly chill of dusk and slow
Upon those under lands the vast
And ever climbing shadow grow.

These verses have a certain deceptive ease, which is not facility, and which, once you have read them two or three times, comes clearly beyond the scope of minor poetry—and yet what follows the magnificent conception contained in them is comparatively facile, clever, ingenious, over-elaborate. We have had merely the intimation of major poetry. But to turn from these general considerations to more particular cases, there is something which MacLeish has to say, which it is especially his property to say, which he is too often blamed for saying, and in which the whole direction of his future lies. It is first clearly, though not completely, set forth in "Einstein". It is the lack of communication between man and the earth, the soil; it is the sense of earth's withdrawal, of earth's denial of itself to man; it is a perpetually unsatisfied desire to understand, to put into words, to re-discover the earth, the air, and the light:

Now there are no words
Nor names to name them and they will not speak

—a statement which is in the later poetry to become an insistent complaint, an unanswerable question.

But if we turn back some five years to the facile imagery, and the somewhat toneless verse of *The Pot of Earth*, which seems to have its origin in all that is pleasant and beautiful in *The Golden Bough*, all that has given so many poets an easy impetus to write, supplied the imagery, and furnished the content, all that has not revealed the fearful and terrible meaning behind its beauty, the cruel and eventually false and shameful communication between man and the earth; and if we then move onward to those strange and pregnant lines in *The Hamlet of A. MacLeish*:

Let there be shelters built in the wild fern
For girls at their first sickness; also hovels
Of green thorn on the hills for the times of women:
Let there be laws inscribed for the keeping of chastity
And knots made to number the days of the moon
Otherwise harm will come of it—

we find a complete revolution, of which the "Einstein" was only the half-way stage; we find an insistent desire to return to the innocent world, to establish an innocent communication between man and the natural world, to return to the world as it was before the "irremediable woe, long done, lost in the times before memory"—a world without shame or superstition, no longer hostile, and no longer alien. This desire is linked up with a sense of great loneliness, great terror, and great frustration. And the frustration is embodied in a perpetual question, a question which the poet seems unable to answer and to which, because it is at the very heart of his later work, he must find an answer before he can achieve a major poetry. We may take an instance from *The Hamlet of A. MacLeish*:

Where is thy tongue great spectre? Hast thou not
Answered to others that with hearts like ours
Followed thee, poets, speakers in the earth?
Didst thou not show them?

And then, through poetry which communicates almost a physical pain, the question is asked

Where wilt thou lead us? Speak . . .
and suddenly the grey
Light and the wind in the branches
and the dawn
and all
Vanished . . .

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We find the same question in *New Found Land*, but with a very important change—

You have spoken words in the earth
You have broken the silence
utterers
Sayers in all lands to all peoples

Hear me
Were there not words
Were there not words to tell with

Were there not words in all languages
In many tongues the same differently
The name cried out Thalassa the sea
The Sea—

for here there is a sense of direction, the recognition of a spiritual Anabasis, the return to the innocent world through unknown, hostile, and alien country.

I admit that this exposition is itself fragmentary, staccato, and irresolute; for there is in MacLeish's poetry an intentional obscurity, the sources of which we can only guess at, and an unintentional obscurity, the obscurity of a poetry that is still at odds with itself; and both of these make one's task of elucidation a difficult and an unsatisfactory one. But we are always in danger of trying to read into his work the meanings we want to find there, and so of missing the fact that in his best work we *feel* that some answer has been provided to the question which is at the heart of it. For every poem of any value is itself a living and a positive thing, with a life separate from and independent of the life of its author; and when we find at the root of MacLeish's poetry the question "Where are the words?" the poem itself supplies an answer. To put it as baldly and as briefly as possible: no poet alive can give to the word, as a separate entity, such a full, single, lucid, and profound being; and no poet can write of the earth, the air, and the light in more startling or clearer imagery. Because these words and this imagery are used to give full meaning to the poet's question, to bring the poet face to face with himself, as it were, they only provide half the answer. But if we go on to consider the inequalities of *The Hamlet*, the poem in which MacLeish fully confessed himself, his frustration, his terror, and his despair, and in which flung a sort of hopeless challenge to himself, and compare them with the relevance of certain poems in *New Found Land*, where all his sense of inability has been clarified and confronted in poetry of a positive and ponderable value, we have a fair idea of the progress he has made. There is no other poet alive who could do the same thing, who could state a case against himself so clearly, and with such courage. An immediate and highly significant comparison is provided by T. S. Eliot's work, which is marked more clearly year by year with Eliot's refusal to commit himself, almost with his fear of being found out. Between Eliot's refusal and MacLeish's inability there is this difference in chief: that MacLeish is not afraid of laying himself wide open to attack and to criticism; he is not afraid to commit himself. He has still the opportunity of becoming a great poet; for not only has he reached a point in *New Found Land* where he has given a full and whole articulation to his frustration, his ignorance, his fear, and his desire, but in doing so he has already begun to escape from himself, to turn outward, and to set his face resolutely towards his destination—the discovery of an innocent world and of the words in which to tell it.

MacLeish is now midway in his Anabasis, with no straight or easy path ahead of him; but for my part I am sure that he will arrive within sight of "Thalassa, the sea, the Sea": which is perhaps a vague and sentimental way of saying that considering his past achievement, and considering his present position, he is almost certain to become one of the major poets of our time. But even if he were never to write another word, he would still be a poet of definite importance: for he has already created a poetry of a lucid and visible beauty in words that are "solid and real, live things".

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# A PORTFOLIO

## THE WAY THINGS HAPPEN

*by Alec Waugh*

"But you can't," he would say; "you can't. Things don't happen that way outside third-rate novels."

Himself, he was a first-rate novelist. The weekly reviews had assured him of that fact. Every autumn there would appear a slim volume delicately printed and delicately bound, in which, the public would be informed, "an exquisite and subtle talent had never been more effectively employed".

Before the war he was a frequent visitor at my father's house. A short, dapper, well-dressed figure in the middle thirties, he would sit, very upright in a straight-backed chair, talking in a slow, punctilious, carefully modulated voice. He was suave, courteous, considerate. He would ask my mother about her garden and her poodle; my brother about his nursery theatricals, myself about my cricket. It was not till he had displayed an appreciative interest in our concerns that he turned towards his own. His troubles were invariably the same.

"I'm in great difficulties with my new novel," he would say. "I can't see what is going to happen next."

The plot that he would outline would rarely be particularly original. A husband, for example, would be on the verge of an elopement from a wife he loved but was not in love with; or a woman with a past would be wondering whether the confession of that past to her husband would ruin the happiness of her marriage. It was his manner, not his matter, that was distinguished. And my father would suggest the kind of solution that one associates with that kind of plot; that the husband should discover his wife was pregnant on the eve of his desertion of her; or that when ultimately the wife confesses it would be to hear her husband say, "But my dear, that's a thing I've always known".

With a little shrug of his padded shoulders the novelist would shake his head.

"You can't," he would say; "you can't. Things don't happen that way outside third-rate novels."

Rather petulantly he would explain himself.

"Just as there are *clichés* in actual writing," he would say, "certain phrases that are just not used because they've been used so often, so there are certain situations that any self-respecting novelist must avoid. You can't have wives reading incriminating letters off sheets of blotting paper; or telephone messages being overheard; or misunderstandings smoothed out at the eleventh hour by people having known things all along. In real life you don't have manufactured plots working to a manufactured climax. It's in a compromise that things work out."

And so it was in a compromise that he would end his novels: in a compromise so indeterminate that it was hard to tell what really had happened or what was going to happen; with the result that although critic after critic applauded in each successive book his "fastidious dexterity of phrase", his "uncompromising fidelity to truth", his "subtle analysis of motive", his "rapier-like gift of intuition", the general public remained indifferent to those excellencies.

He did not worry. He derived from Siberian securities a comfortable private in-



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come. In London life he occupied a dignified position. His books were read by the men and women whose appreciation he valued. To first-rate writers fame invariably came tardily. He was a happy man.

It was on the full summer of this happiness that the war intruded. It intruded devastatingly. Within a year he was in hospital gassed and wounded, unfit for further service. In the spring of 1917 the Russian Revolution reduced his capital to the value of so much printed paper.

"I don't know what's going to happen to me," he said during a visit he paid us in the summer of that year. "For the moment, of course, I've got my captain's pay, and when the war's over I shall get a wound gratuity and a pension. But it won't be much. I shan't have a penny of private income left. Mine aren't the sort of books that bring in money, and even if they were, I doubt if I shall be fit for serious concentrated work for several years. I don't know what's going to happen."

It was the same question that formerly he had put to us about his books and as one looked up at him sitting there, still upright in the straight-backed chair but with a drained, old look upon his face and with hands that quivered, one could not face that future with much confidence. His friends would probably be able to arrange a civil list pension for him. There would be his wound gratuity. Most likely he would live in some small hotel on the Riviera, contributing an occasional essay or short story to highbrow quarterlies. To some such compromise as that it would work out.

For over a year after that we did not see him. Then one morning my father received a letter suggesting that he would like to come over on the following Sunday. The letter was addressed from an extremely expensive block of service flats facing the park in Knightsbridge. He arrived in a Rolls-Royce car, the door of which was opened by a liveried chauffeur. He was smartly dressed. He walked shakily. But there was a confident, contented look upon his face.

His eyes twinkled as he explained.

"I feel almost ashamed of telling you," he said. "There was an uncle in Australia whom I'd never seen, and scarcely knew by name. He was terribly proud of having an author in the family. He bought everything I wrote. He showed my books to all the farmers who visited his station, and felt prouder still when not one of them could understand them. He was so proud that he left me all his money. There was quite a lot of it.

"It's the kind of thing," he added, "that only happens in third-rate novels and real life."

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## THE SUN ROSE THEN, ALSO

*by David Morton*

It was a fortunate coincidence that hurled me immediately out of Elizabeth Madox Roberts's *The Great Meadow* into an actual visit to "Kentuck", the subject of that amazing book. And there was another and later coincidence which was responsible for the reflections set down in these columns. Throughout the reading of *The Great Meadow* there was coming to life again, in the remote recesses of my mind, the memory of another novel of frontier life in Kentucky—a book that I read for the first time twenty-five years ago.

On the day of my arrival in Kentucky, I was sitting in my father's library, in Louisville, when my eye fell on *The Choir Invisible*, by James Lane Allen. Immediately I was transported back into another age of literature and among another order of beings that wrote and read it. And yet, it was only yesterday that we were all reading that book—with a great delight in the morning freshness in which it moved, and a very profound respect for the sober dignity and fine sentiments of Mrs. Falconer and John Gray. And

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there was another and special delight in the writing, itself. The sentences were so carefully balanced, so skilful and so graceful. We cannot write that way today; perhaps there is no reason why we should. The "morning freshness", now, seems a fanciful world, a kind of refuge and escape that we scorn to take. And those fine sentiments that thrilled us in 1897 seem something less than true, however fine they may be. We are living in another world, as truly as though we had moved to a different planet.

What I sat down to do here, was to try to remember that other world, and the place of this book in it. So little has survived, of that world and of the things in it and in ourselves that this book stood for and rendered articulate. And yet, despite our arrogance in this present, there must have been something of true and lasting worth there. For I am able to find things in myself that I brought away from that book, which I read in 1905—a certain feeling for the dignity of man, a certain respect for life itself, as a responsible phenomenon in which man participates, and may participate proudly and well. I shall not soon forget the immense admiration I conceived for John Gray, who moved with such a fine, religious seriousness through the ironic and defeating circumstances of his life. I have thought of him more than a hundred times in this new age of fiction whose heroes make a kind of poetic tragedy of defeat, sweetened by the puling melody of self-pity. What a mean thing life has become in our imagination, and what an unworthy fate we find in it for ourselves! An irresponsible and degrading thing at whose hands neither defeat nor triumph has any significance. It was not so in that world of John Gray. He—and we, ourselves—conceived a universe of law and design, and man moved through it with something like dignity and self-respect. His end was happy or unhappy, as character and circumstance determined; but both character and circumstance had integrity, and Aristotle would have said that the hero's destiny could be called, interchangeably, tragedy or triumph. Certainly, one cannot speak of the "tragedy" of John Gray, without wishing to sound the word "triumph" immediately after. The love of his life was lost, and his time on earth impoverished of that sweetness. But a proud integrity of spirit and a clear-eyed, unembittered outlook on life remained his to the end. We leave him, a tragic and yet strangely triumphant figure—and both the universe of law and the soul of man are vindicated.

How stark and "classic" the thing sounds, when stated thus in the stripped terms of its spiritual significance! And yet *The Choir Invisible* was a warmly human story. I read a good many novels of the younger generation; we all do. And I have not encountered many more convincing young ladies than Kitty Falconer, whose fickle passings disturbed for a while the surface of John Gray's profundities. That was before the greater richness and warmth of Mrs. Falconer's nature unfolded before him a country where he might dwell in happiness and peace—if it were only his to enter. But it was not; Mrs. Falconer's husband was present. And these two souls that leaned toward one another for a moment in mutual recognition, straightened and moved away in separation. That last interview is a scene that the reader is not apt to forget—John Gray walking down the road, out of that world forever, with Mrs. Falconer's eyes upon him until he has passed beyond her horizon.

This brings us back with a sharp turn to the changed world in which we read today: "the right to live one's life"; "repression"; "the martyr complex". All our new shibboleths rise up and cry aloud. Certainly, in our day, "where the sun also rises", things would have gone differently. Would they have gone wiser or better—either for art or life? Struggle is still the glory of each, and a sober faith in something is still the mother of integrity in both life and art. One must believe in something, and Biology as a faith

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brings us down on all fours—a position that is reminiscently interesting, but a little unflattering to the 30,000 years in which man has been trying to walk upright!

Perhaps that is what I am feeling about this book today—that in it man was trying to walk upright. And the effort was stimulating to the mind and spirit of the reader. There was a sense of faith and a sense of effort. Perhaps we should think today that the faith was wilfully blind; indeed, was little more than a comfortable superstition; and that the effort was misguided. But such as they were, both were present. Today there is so little of either. We are hungry for faith and for the satisfying exercise of living up to it. It may be just this that made me wish to think about this book, this morning, and about the lost world in which it had its place.

And yet, there were other things, also, things "loved and lost a while"—things of less profound significance, perhaps, but which had their values. There was, for example, the matter of behavior—to oneself and to others—in the ordinary affairs of life. How shall one express it? In private thought, in speech, in manner, life was held up, was not permitted to decline and sag and collapse. There were certain things that one did not think or say or do, because they impaired one's sense of the dignity of life and one's own personal dignity and self-respect. I am not thinking of the subject of sex, which has preëmpted the whole issue of frankness in these latter days, so that to say that a man has a "frank and honest attitude toward life" means, usually, that he insists upon blubbering about sex, loudly, in the drawing-room. What was there, in the nineties, was a whole economy of reticence and assertion that gave private life and social intercourse a character and manner widely different from life today. It is the fashion, now, to cry it down as dishonest and romantic and sentimental. And yet, what I was remembering, as I looked at the back of *The Choir Invisible* this morning, was a kind of aristocracy of private behavior and social intercourse which refused to let life down, which held the lines of it up, and made of it a thing which a man would be willing to answer for. To live one's private life, in its most secret and intimate moments, as though the multitude looked on; and, in the behavior with others, to create a drama of the best that we know in life—something of that kind seemed a steady and religious will in the character of John Gray and Mrs. Falconer and others. It goes back, you see, to this same respect for life and the livers of it, a respect the impairment of which is one of the measures of distance between that day and ours. Nor was this old economy of thought and behavior all reticence and denial and repression. It had its assertions, its open affirmations —usually of fine and fine sounding sentiments, declarations of ideals and purposes, affirmations of faiths and principles. How far we are from that! We are better than we care to say, and the exception among us, who dares assert a noble thing, embarrasses us so painfully that we seek relief by suspecting him of every ignoble thing. But the two things went together with our fathers. The reticence was something more than a manner and a piece of cowardice; it was a determination that the ugly and unworthy things of life should find no easy realization in ourselves. And the assertion of what was fine and noble was not cant and bombast: it was a placing of emphasis on the aspects of life that should be most actively remembered. The result was an individual mind and a society that imparted something like aristocratic refinement and grace and dignity to life. Menander's pathetic observation that "men do not live as they would, but as they must" was a concession that they were never willing to make. They broke their hearts and strangled their breath to live it "as they would"—to make it a thing that they could live with in self-respect and dignity.

I have not read *The Choir Invisible* for twenty-five years, but I mean to read it again,

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soon, for these things and for one other. I said, at the outset, that we do not write such sentences, now, as James Lane Allen wrote. The self-conscious stylists, with their artificialities of manner that is empty of character, have brought "style" into disrepute. But this sense of the dignity of life and the individual, with its faith and its struggle, with its reticence and proud assertion, with its aristocratic grace, has its own necessary manner of speech. The style is created by the sense of these things, and in turn reflects them, and communicates them. I, for one, am in want of such communication, from a man who felt life finely and spoke finely of what he felt.

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## HAROLD BELL WRIGHT: PRESS AGENT

*by L. C. Milstead*

I VISITED, last tourist season, a spot in the Missouri Ozarks made famous by an absurdly romantic book, Harold Bell Wright's *The Shepherd of the Hills*, and found a new trail running hard by that other one that is "nobody knows how old". It is the high road of commerce, and the last twenty-five years have seen trade grow from a few hundred dollars into twelve millions annually. And I was convinced that whatever Mr. Wright's shortcomings as a man of letters, he should be crowned king of press-agents.

When he pitched his tent on yon side of Uncle Matt's house so he could look down into Mutton Hollow, across to Dewey's Bald, or clean over to the Boston Mountains in Arkansas—at least, our guide said they were the Boston Mountains—Uncle Ike at his little postoffice at Notch did a cash business of between twenty-five and fifty dollars a year. The old store still stands and is operated by Uncle Ike's widow, but its business is not much larger than it was when the stranger struck the trail that ran from Jim Lane's house around the rim of the hollow until it reached Uncle Matt's back yard. But just a few miles away run United States highways, Number 65 and Number 43, with streams of traffic that have swelled the business of the Lake Taneycomo area to one million dollars a month.

When *The Shepherd of the Hills* was being written, in 1902, the natives could hear the blasting that was preliminary to the coming of the railroad, and in 1906, one year before the book was published, the residents of Taney and Stone counties saw their first train. Wright's picturesque tale was read by millions. Grandiloquent in style, the book nevertheless was authentic in treatment of life in the hills and not foolishly extravagant concerning the beauties of nature. A greater artist might have written a better book, might have given a better picture of the people of the hills, but his work probably wouldn't have been a best-seller, and would not have resulted, with the help of the railroad, in the great influx of sightseers.

The residents of Taney County, Missouri, should erect a monument to Wright. True, the railroad made the country more accessible and the dam across White River created a better body of water for sports, but the driving force behind development in Taney County was and is the desire of hundreds of thousands of persons to see where Dad Howitt herded sheep, the hills that Pete roamed, the pine tree that was his "mother", and to stand for a moment at Sammy Lane's Lookout and feel that the deep blue haze that hangs over the distant mountains is the rim of the world.

Entering the Mutton Hollow region by way of Reed's Spring, one comes first to Fairy Cave, connected with the Wright story only by virtue of the fact that the man who operates it is a son of the real Shepherd of the Hills. His name is Waldo Powell, and, oddly enough, he was the man Wright made

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into a "sissy" character, Ollie Stewart. Waldo Powell, like his father, the late Truman S. Powell, is a virile man of rare intelligence. Wright twisted him into the character, Ollie, simply because he was the only man of the region who had a college education. When he conducts tours through the cave he doesn't tell his guests he was Ollie until they have a chance to learn for themselves that he is a man of mental and physical vigor. Every inch of the way through the cave is over steps and walks which Mr. Powell constructed with his own hands. And that was no sissy's job—the mixing and laying of eight thousand dollars' worth of sand, gravel and cement. His investment brings in one hundred dollars a day during the tourist season.

A few miles farther on is Marvel Cave, operated by Miss Miriam Lynch, daughter of the late W. H. Lynch, a Canadian scholar and diplomat who became enamoured of the cave and gave forty years of his long life to it. The cave is said by some geologists to be larger than Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. Miss Lynch operates a tea room and antique shop near the cave, but one's impression is that her first interest is in the country her father loved so well.

One can buy a pound of lard, a box of rolled oats or a picture postcard from Uncle Ike's widow; a relic, or a copy of *The Shepherd of the Hills* may be purchased at Uncle Matt's barn, and then opportunities to traffic are gone until one reaches Branson and pays Mrs. Pearl Spurlock three dollars to add to the eighteen thousand others she has collected in eleven years as guide. The car stops near the Bank of Branson, and one enters to question the cashier, Dave Parnell.

"Our clearings here last year were five or six million dollars," he said. "Add those of the Shepherd of the Hills Bank of Reed's Spring, the Bank of Hollister and the Taney County Bank of Forsyth, and the total is between ten and twelve million dollars. Twenty-five years ago there was trading here and at Garber, Reed's Spring, Forsyth Notch and other crossroads, but it was trade in commodities. More money changes hands in an hour now than in a year a quarter of a century ago.

"Harold Bell Wright was our unwitting publicity agent. Railroads, motor-cars and highways have made the region accessible. Hydro-electric development has given us modern conveniences. That is the whole story; the rest is picture—you see it in the cabins and hotels on a hundred hillsides."

Probably eight hundred persons lived in the Lake Taneycomo region twenty years ago. The year-around population now is about three thousand, and the average summer population is between twelve thousand and fifteen thousand. On an average day one hundred and fifty motor-cars stream into Branson from the north. Some stay, others head across the bridge to Hollister, Powersite, Forsyth or to a favorite camp. Probably as many come from the South. A cabin costs from two to eight dollars a night, a hotel room from one to ten dollars.

A sidelight on the commerce there is the fishing tackle business. "Ed" Stallcup of the R. O. Welchel Hardware Company says fifty thousand dollars' worth of fishing tackle is sold in Branson every year. Most fishermen bring their own, worth at least one million dollars.

Recognized camps in the area list five hundred and fifty cabins and cottages, and there are hundreds of privately owned cottages; some of them worth from ten to fifteen thousand dollars. Cedar is the most popular material, and even here it is not cheap.

With water-power development and steady increase in population, industries are gaining, too. Little factories and canning plants dot the hillsides, and they all have come since 1907 when *The Shepherd of the Hills* went on sale. Industry, the tourist business and agriculture—they all are Wright's doing. This is the age of press-agentry, and Wright was its prophet.

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# "THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD"

## *by C. A. Nicholson*

WATER is a pure fluid, but it has not the strength of port-wine (Johnson's letters) nor the spirit and fine flavour of champaign (Gray's). Good water is to be had almost everywhere, and good epistolary water without its having cost the gold of genius to procure it".

Thus Anna Seward, the Swan of Lichfield, wrote to William Hayley, deprecating his admiration for Cowper's letters, and neatly, if unintentionally, assessing the worth of her own. This good epistolary water flowed from private correspondence into print, for she held that "there is no greater vanity in publishing one's letters than one's essays or poems". In her case there was assuredly less. Her essays are negligible, her poems often ridiculous, whereas her letters contain, amid grievances and pomposities, wit, sense, and reasoned criticism.

The eighteenth century was renowned for swans and bards. Anna Seward achieved the just distinction of swimming in a city. The placid ornamental water reflecting Lichfield Cathedral may have mirrored also a number of solemn thoughts destined for the edification of posterity.

Although her name, today, calls up smiles from the learned, she is firmly rooted in biography, immemorially placed in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. Samuel Maunders's *Biographical Treasury* for 1862 states that "Seward, Anna, was the daughter of the Rev. Thomas Seward, himself a poet. She was born at Eyam in Derbyshire in 1747. She evinced a poetical taste in early life. In 1782 she published her poetical romance of *Louisa*: and she subsequently printed a collection of sonnets, and a life of Dr. Darwin, in which she asserted her claim to the first fifty lines of that author's *Botanic Garden*. Died 1809. An edition of her works with a biographical preface was published by Mr. (afterwards Sir Walter) Scott; her letters also appeared in 6 vols. but her fame has passed away".

Nevertheless, she is allotted over two pages of the current *Dictionary of National Biography*, and in 1907 her questing spirit, still ambitious, captured the charmingly reluctant and ironic pen of E. V. Lucas. He proposed to reconstruct the intellectual society of Lichfield in its Swan's day and to pass on to a companion volume about Norwich. "But Miss Seward steadily became too much for me. As in Lichfield in her life, so in my Lichfield enquiries in her death, she took the first place. Bit by bit the other Athenians receded until, struggling against such masterfulness no more, I too submitted to the Swan and made her my principal theme."

Now, thirteen years later, this insistent personality glides again to the surface owing to a chance that even her far sight could scarcely have visualized. Laboriously, she copied out her letters, twelve volumes of them, altered and embellished, and asked that all originals should be destroyed. Yet



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seven, at least, have been preserved, and it can be imagined with what a ruffling of plumage and secret flutters of delight the Swan would welcome the reappearance of her legible phrases, still safe in their folds.

The Martins, her cousins, who cherished them, were perhaps unaware of the order for destruction. They passed into the keeping of a sister, Miss Bliss, thence to a great-aunt of the present owner, Mr. Hugh Badcock. He recently discovered them in a drawer, tucked away amongst old family papers.

Save for gaps where the wafers are cut from the paper, the letters are intact. More revealing and now no more private than the printed pages, they exhale for the least sentimental a lingering inevitable whiff of the eighteenth century.

The first is written to Mrs. Martin, of whom a thumbnail sketch is given in Volume VI, Constable's edition. "The little smart widow, moving in the fashionable circles at Bath, is become a notable farmeress, with all about her of old-fashioned comfort and frugality."

But in 1785 her "Caro Sposo" was living and evidently a trusted adviser of Miss Seward's.

*"Lichfield. April 13th 1785.*

"My dear Mrs. Martin,

I have recev'd my Irish stuff safe, and think it the most perfect beauty of its kind I ever beheld. My pecuniary debts to your Caro Sposo augment very formidably; I trust the day of payment will come chearfully to us, and *face to face* ere it be long.

"The lilliputian Mrs. Boothby is safe thro' her hour of peril; it was surrounded with dangers; however she and the Child are both likely to do well.

"I sent to the *Gent: Mag*: a memoir of my Carpenter Bard, an extract from those of his letters, which you saw; a poem of his, and one of my own, address'd to him. They appear'd in the last publication; and, the very day after that Mag: came out, the Editor of the Whitehall *Evening Post* had the effrontery to copy the memoir, as if address'd to *himself*. Of a common Newspaper it was certainly ridiculous to say 'that I consider'd it as a proper and honorable repository for whatever is curious in Nature, in Art, and in Science'; tho' there was no flattery in expressing myself thus of the *Gent: Magazine*, which is the most ingenious and candid of all the monthly Publications."

It was also the most hospitable to Miss Seward's efforts. Against critics and newspapers alike she seems to have had an abiding grievance; but she had some cause to fume at contemporary depredations—notably in the case of Dr. Darwin, who did not deny that the first fifty lines of *The Botanic Garden* were taken bodily from the poetess.

The Carpenter Bard was William Newton, a protégé, whose humble origin and craft apparently gave his literary efforts a fictitious value in the eyes of his patroness. The son of a Derbyshire carpenter, he was himself a carpenter, and, later, an unsuccessful cotton-spinner, with much love for letters, but little skill in their making.

The following excerpt shows Miss Seward in another aspect: an alert spinster, shrewdly aware of her interests. On her father's death she would inherit some four hundred a year, a fair sum, though hardly enough to maintain the dignity of her life in the place to which she had been so long accustomed. Happily, she was never obliged to forsake her Cathedral Close; but at thirty-eight she was naturally a little apprehensive as to the future.

In these days of competent, plain-spoken business women, the eighteenth century is apt to be regarded as an age of feminine helplessness and ornate dependence, an illusion fostered by its flowing periods. Anna Seward's rhapsodic style, however, is sensibly modified when her affairs demand a plain statement of fact.

She continued: "When you write to your Caro Sposo, have the goodness to tell him,

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that his tenant, Mr. Gill of this place, has play'd a very shabby trick. He came to Mr. W. Buckeridge, whom he knew was desirous to have Mr. Martin's Field; told him that he had no longer any want of it *himself* and that he could let it to *him*, if he would give him 6 guineas for the *goodwill* of the Ground. I believe this sort of gratuity is common for Tradesmen's shops, but unprecedented for Pasture. Buckeridge was simple enough to agree to give Mr. Gill four guineas; but came to me complaining of the imposition. Last week John Fernihough represented to me that when, by the loss of my Father, I shou'd *myself* become an Housekeeper, I shou'd probably chuse to keep a Cow, and that I had better apply to Mr. Martin for permission to become his Tenant, as he heard Gill no longer wanted it for himself. This was before I knew of Gill's shabbiness, and extortion; and, approving John's counsel, I determin'd to apply to Cousin Thomas for such permission. I cou'd wish that he would immediately give his present Tenant warning, alledging that I had inform'd him of Gill's no longer wanting the Ground for himself, and of my own desire to become Mr. Martin's Tenant.

"My Father continues in much the same state as when you saw him last—I hope rather better than worse.

"After the late Lapland Winter what is become of the April Showers? Vegetation thirsts for them in vain. So long a drought converts the vernal Gale into a dusty Whirlwind, and represses the balmy essence of the flowers. You will miss these refreshing luxuries on your little rural walks. . . .

"Excuse the blots with which careless hurry always deforms my paper, and believe me yours sincerely

"A. Seward."

The next letter is dated "Lichfd. Feb. 11th, 1786", and runs:

"It gives me great pleasure, my dear Mrs. Martin, to find your health continues in an improving state, and that cold bathing agrees with you. My poor Father has been much better within these 8 weeks than I have known him in the preceding 12. Total confinement to the House, and he giving up his morning airings, have averted the returns of that paralytic disorder. . . . The only *possible* means of persuading him to stay at home was, by representing to his *growing* passion for money, the *saving* which wou'd be produced in his yearly income by laying aside the Chaise. . . . My Father's intellects are in a strange . . . state—often perfectly clear, and oftener an absolute chaos. He begins to murmur over being confined to the House, and I live in daily dread of not being able to keep him quiet under his own roof.

"I am much obliged by my Cousin Tom's intelligence about the necessity he apprehended there was of my Father's surrending to me all right he might have to interfere in the disposal of the Grange Estate—but Mr. Hinkley tells me it is not necessary. By a Will made in 1781 he has left ev'rything he has, except the legacies, to me and to my disposal. I have no doubt that he would make any necessary surrender in his *power*.

"Mr. Hinkley and Coz Tom will determine what is requisite to be done—I am perfectly willing, indeed desirous the Estate shou'd be sold, having a great aversion to property being subject to life renewals. Cousin Martin has been very good in paying my bill at Robins, and in suffering me to be in his debt for my little present to the Children. I will either send him a note for the two sums, or pay them to you, when I have the pleasure of seeing you, which I shall begin soon to expect. . . ."

Robins was the famous literary auctioneer. E. V. Lucas says "so far as my researches go, George Robins was Miss Seward's aptest pupil. His style, like hers, was curled and oiled: adjectives waited upon him like slaves: he too word-painted. In short, he practised Sewardese". But his eloquence was at the

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service of his trade. Hers gushes forth only when business is left behind.

"We have a wretched set of players here, amongst whom one charming actress appears as an oriental pearl wou'd do amidst a knot of gangreen'd french beads. In being with *us* she is in a sphere much unworthy of her pure, and gentle lustre; since tho' she has many warm admirers, and generous Friends in Lichfield, yet without having given a shadow of cause for it, one Family in this neighbourhood have been industrious in denying her talents, and in setting up in opposition to *her*, the Master of the Company, who has treated her with very dishonest cruelty, and who, tho' he has an elegant person, is a *miserable* actor; and scarce ever knows 3 lines of his part. At the head of this Family, who have been so active in wounding the *theatric* fame, and the *benifit interest* of elegant Mrs. Reilly, is a Brother Poet, who has certainly talents, which ought to have preserv'd him from commencing a *Justice Midas* in a contest, where the disparity is as great as between Pan and Apollo. There can be but one possible reason for this Esqr. Elliot's injustice and partiality . . . and yet I have long been on terms of intimacy with the Elliot Family—never offended any of them, and have receiv'd several little poems from Mrs. Elliot, that express a flattering partiality for my talents, and my disposition—but, for my part, I think *Inconsistancy* grows ev'ry hour more and more frequent. Mr. Elliot being an Esqr. with a fine Coach, &c, has persuaded the majority of the Folks to call in question Mrs. Reilly's pretensions alike to the pensive and sprightly graces. O! how supremely do I detest such injustice, such *blind* prejudice!

"She was Coleman's first Actress at the Hay-Market the two last Summers, and has been inveigled down here by the fraudulent acts of the Manager, and by promises which he has shamefully broken. She *was* Miss Frodsham. Youth, Beauty, Grace, Elegance, Pathos, and comic Spirit are all her own—in order to injure her benefit the envious Rivals of [her] fame amongst the Players invented a thousand paltry falsehoods, and were encouraged in doing so by those who ought to have despised them.

"Have you read the wittiest and most amusing of all possible Essays, which sports so agreeably, though not very mercifully, with the misfortunes and the faults of ancient Virginity? There is certainly but one Man existing, whose Genius, Wit and learning are competent to its production.

"Adieu dear Mrs. Martin! love to Caro Sposo, and kind remembrances to all my Nottingham Friends, who are so good to enquire after me.

"Yours affectionately,

"A. Seward."

William Hayley's "Essay on Old Maids" was published anonymously, but its authorship could not elude the Swan's acumen. She modelled herself on Dr. Johnson, whose style she revered as much as she deplored his personality. Ancient Virginity is a characteristic euphemism.

Anna likes "this growing Latinity—it rids us of a number of those hissing s's that deform our language, which becomes more harmonious for their dismission". There she ends on a hiss loud as that of any sacred Roman goose unwittingly saving the Capitol!

Miss Seward's attack on the Esquire, as such, is one of many pleasing refutations of the snobbishness with which she has been charged. All offending critics are dubbed moles or Midases, well deserving the fabled asses' ears bestowed by Apollo. She cries: "The eye of the reviewer is the mole's dim curtain!" and in a later outburst "O! it is so much in the grudging spirit of modern criticism, to judge the merit of a recent author's claims to celebrity by his defects, whether real or imaginary, and not as they ought to be judged by his confessed excellences. The authors of past ages are more equitably treated. We do not deny the . . . resplendence of their orbs because we perceive spots on their disk".

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How little times change! Anna Seward is none the less paying today for the exaggerated esteem of her contemporaries. Horace Walpole, it is true, raised a belittling voice; to him she was merely "one of half a dozen more of those harmonious virgins 'whose thoughts and phrases are like their gowns, old remnants cut and turned' ". Southey, less scathing, held that "With all her affectation there was a very likable warmth and sincerity about her". But these tepid notes are drowned in the chorus of approval. Two great soldiers, Washington and Elliot (Lord Heathfield) paid extraordinary tribute to her "Monody on Major André". Washington, who was forced to agree to André's execution, was deeply perturbed by her poetic censure. When peace was declared, he sent a special envoy to acquit himself in her eyes of the tragedy. America to Lichfield is a far cry. Small wonder that Anna was flattered!

"General Washington did me the honour to charge his aide-de-camp to assure me that no circumstance of his life had given him so much pain as the necessary sacrifice of André's life and next to that deplored event, the censure passed upon himself in a poem which he admired, and for which he loved the author."

She could not doubt his word. He was one of many. Famous artists painted her, Romney, Opie, Kettle; magazines sang her praises. Scott journeyed from Edinburgh to see her; the Reverend Dr. Mansel, Master of Trinity, from Cambridge. Both were strangers, knowing her only by her work and correspondence. A fellow citizen, the mighty Johnson himself, rumbled his approval. Her naïve description of his homage is worth quoting: "Perhaps as a reward for the unobtrusive disposition of my muse, he paid an high compliment, in my presence, to my 'Elegy on Cook'. Having commended the Columbia of Mdme. Bocage, he added, 'She describes many things well, but nothing so well as you have described the seas, and shores, round the South Pole'. I blushed, curtsied, and instantly turned the conversation into a different channel".

It is difficult to associate blushes and curtseys with the majestic phrases and unsheathed claws of the next letter, which differs even as to date from the colorless published version.

"Well, my dear and amiable Mrs. Martin, after a three weeks whirl in the London vortex, the blooming shades of quiet Lichfield receiv'd me again on Wednesday Evening. I find you had been a fleeting visionary beneath them a few days before me. Wou'd I had been at *home*! for, besides the pleasure which I shou'd have received even in that transient interview, I cou'd better have prated to you half an hour about all I had seen, and heard, than attempt to rush back, upon *paper*, into the busy World I left behind me. . . .

"Descriptions have been so numerous, both in private letters, and in the public prints of the magnificent Spectacle, and the sublime harmonic effects of the Abby Festival, which still infinitely transcends ev'ry idea which words can convey of them, that it wou'd be superfluous for me to say much on the subject. . . . By great, and it must be own'd very fatiguing exertions, such as rising by 5 each morning, being at the Abby door by 8 and standing in the Crowd till the Doors open'd at 9, our Party got best possible places. . . . Mr. Saville, as principal Contra Alto, was in the front line of the Orchestra. His silver notes echo'd full and sweetly thro' the Isles, [*sic*] and along the vaulted roof. . . . The rewarding meed of royal praise was transmitted to him by the Lords Dudly, and Camarthen. From the musical critiques in the News-paper no *real* intelligence can be gain'd. It is well understood how *they* are fabricated. That they are the work of Gazzeteers, bribed to depreciate, and puff, who have never *heard* the Performance on which they decide. . . .

Rubinelli is the present rage. What he may be in the Opera I will not pretend to say, because he did not perform the Night I was there, and indeed worse singing I have seldom heard than met my ear on that Eve-

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ning. . . . Mara's popularity however *fades* before *his*; but there is, I think, no justice in the preference, except that of mortifying her unbounded insolence; but caprice, and the infatuation of novelty, not the more laudable design of humbling her arrogance, are the *sources* of this preference. Rubinelli's voice is certainly of an uncommon structure for one of that unmanly tribe; it is between a soprano, and a contra alto."

Saville was vicar choral of Lichfield Cathedral, but he appears to have sung at festivals all over the country. He was a widower and Anna's affection for him was an open secret. He was indeed the best beloved of those to whom she gave her maiden heart and in her will she requests "to be laid by the side of him who was my faithful excellent friend, through the course of thirty-seven years, the late Mr. John Saville". Rubinelli, a singer still celebrated in biography, had apparently been sacrificed to art in his youth, though the practice of unsexing choirboys was then dying out.

"I made several new acquaintance among the Literati, to whom I was introduced by Miss Williams, my fair Sister of the Lyre [whose] charming Poems are just publish'd by a large and brilliant [paper cut from wafer].

"Our breakfast parties in these poetical, and philosophic circles gratified my understanding as much *almost* and yet *that* is a *bold* assertion, as the Handelian Orchestra my musical perceptions—but no! no!—*one* was exhillerating *satisfaction*, the other was *rapture*. My 'Horatian Odes,' publish'd in the *Gentleman's Magazine* since October last, were mention'd to me in these Circles, with the most gratifying panegyric. I receiv'd the following brilliant and flattering Impromptu from a Gentleman of this set, whose name is Gregory, author of some learned, and ingenious Essays, which bear an high reputation:

When Guido was ask'd, as we read, to define
Where he caught his fine taste, and his manner divine,
He produc'd a stout Porter, of muscular size,
With a Cerberus front, and with Gorgon-like eyes.
From this *exquisite* model he sketch'd out a face
Replete with all softness, expression, and grace.
So Seward, with matchless, with magical art,
From the rhymes of old Beech, and the prose of Kit Smart,
From Duncombe, from Dunster, and each bald translation,
Produces bright streams of divine inspiration;
Has learnt from these Grubs, what t's plain wd. not strike them;
The art of all arts, that of *not* writing *like them*;
Avoid all the Rocks that dull Rhymers have split on,
And teach courtly Horace to speak like a Briton,
Preserve his own sweetness, and spirit, and ease,
And, with fresh acquir'd graces, command him to please.

"Your good Caro Sposo came to me in one of these literary Circles, but we were just breaking up as he arriv'd, and he left us immediately. 'Peter Pindar' was not with us that morn; but I have been often in his company. He is a Physician of the name of Woolcot. When I deprecated for any future publication of mine, the blighting power of his *wit*, he told me that he always consider'd Acquaintance as the bud of Friendship; that, as such, he held its rights of exemption *sacred*, whether time *did* or did not ripen it into fruit.

"My Father joins me in affectionate regards, so wou'd Mr. S, were he in Lichfd.; but he stays in Town till the beginning of next Week. . . .

"Adieu! Adieu!

"A. Seward."

*Lichfd. June 17th, 1786.*

Her fair Sister of the Lyre, Miss Helen Maria Williams, was one of the poetesses on whom Dr. Johnson turned a favorable eye, though Horace Walpole linked her with Miss Seward in contemptuous dismissal. Anna had a high opinion of her poems. "We trace in

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them true sensibility of heart, and the genuine fires of an exalted imagination." But the Swan was perhaps more discriminating in her judgment of music than of verse. What can be said for Dr. Gregory's "brilliant impromptu"? Was this learned prebendary of St. Paul's slyly teasing? At any rate his tribute was accepted unquestioningly and he was added thereafter to her formidable and honorable list of correspondents. Her claims to recognition were based on private letters rather than Horatian odes. "Why," she asks, "should not genius expand in private letters; describe scenery with the glow of the painter; characters with the fire of the dramatist; moralize with the dignity of the philosopher; and sometimes, under the pressure of sorrow, court 'Fancy as the friend of Woe'?"

After the London vortex, she sailed, serene, for some weeks on the artificial waters of her Cathedral city. The autumn, however, found her busily describing scenery with the glow of the painter to one of her most favored correspondents and poetical associates, the Reverend T. S. Whalley of Langford Court, author of *Edwy and Edilda.*

The letter (Vol. 1, Constable's edition) begins: "I am just returned from paying a delightful visit of three weeks to my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Granville. . . ." Why the stay should have dwindled to ten days in the newly retrieved version to Mrs. Martin, dated a month later, Oct: 1786, it is not easy to conjecture. Calwich and its hostess, however, glow in almost identical colors. Evidently this purple patch was too precious to bestow on a solitary correspondent. Its repetition is a weakness at which the innocent alone are entitled to sling stones:

"I lately pass'd 10 days with my Friend and Mr. and Mrs. Granville at Calwich their pleasant and elegant Mansion on the edge of Derbyshire, and in the Vicinage of Ileham, and Dovedale. Calwich is quite fairy Land, so verdant are its Lawns, so crystal are its Waters. . . . The Owners of this charming Villa have Minds as cultivated as its scenery, and as clear as its Lake. The Lady of that Lake is young, lovely, and admired; yet domestic, and she likes her home as well as it is natural for those to do, who have no magnetism about them, of wit, or beauty, to attract attention, or stimulate flattery. But Mrs. Granville is by no means coldly unsocial. . . ."

The following December her father's chronic illness became acute and her agitated pen spent itself in morbid and slightly unsavory detail:

*"Saturday, Decbr. 23rd, 1786.*

"My dear Mrs. Martin,

Since this day seven-night I have suffered a severe portion of sorrow and terror; at wh. period my poor Father was seized with apoplectic symptoms—yet was the attack so precisely similar to those, wh. he has conquer'd so often, that my hopes were by no means feeble that he wou'd again struggle thro' these death-like shadows. . . . The same measures were pursued with those wh. formerly relieved him, and I expected, as usual, that when the blister on his head discharged the dire oppression on the brain wd. give way. Sooth'd by these hopes I went to bed on that Night. He had slept deep, and sound as symptomatic of the malady, till 7, when a new Disease came on the most terrifying in the World;—epileptic fits. . . . I had order'd to be call'd upon any change, and I rush'd out of bed to *his* bed side, when, O God! the most dreadful sight that ever wrung my heart presented itself, my *dear* Father distorted with direful convulsions, his hands clenched, and every nerve strung into the strength of iron —his eyes rolling wide, his mouth drawn very shockingly, and making a dismal noise between groaning and screaming. I wonder I did not drop down dead with the agony of such a sight. Docr. Jones, and Mrs. Green came in just as the 4th fit seiz'd him, not half an hour from the first attack. They bled him. . . . *Now*, said I to Docr. Jones, there can be, I fear, no further hopes—'None, Madam,' was his answer. 'I never knew a single instance, nor heard of one in wh.

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Epilepsy, the consequence of other disorders and long debility, was *not* fatal. I hope, however, you will find the bleeding prevent the return of these fits, but he must sink,—and you must submit.' I tried to summon fortitude. . . . All Sunday he lay in an utterly hopeless state—only that the blister began to discharge. Exhausted by hysteric fits and ceaseless weeping thro' the day, I sunk into terrified and broken slumbers—but had resolved no more to encounter the shock of an interview—nor had I resolution, when I awaken'd, at 6 (and I had sat up till one) to enquire for confirmation of the dreaded event, till, seven, when I rang my bell—and was told that my Father had had a good Night, was come to his senses; has spoken intelligibly, and askd. for his breakfast. . . . When the Docr. came I never saw Man so astonished. . . . On Wednesday Morn: Docr. Jones again pronounced him *nearer* Death than he had done. . . . I sat up till two—no change—when I took as I thought my last kiss, his lips and hands were cold. I then went to bed more resigned than on Sunday. . . . At 8 o'clock the *Saint's day* prayer bell rang. I started up in bed, crying out to Fanny, that it was my Father's passing-bell and rang for the sad confirmation. As the Maid open'd my chamber door she said, in a chearful voice, Madam my Master's much better again when they brought him his Wine at 6, he open'd his eyes, and said, 'what do you give me Wine for, I want my breakfast'. . . . From that instant he has continued better; tho' he has a violent cough, exactly such a cough as he us'd to have, twice or thrice a yr., before his first paralytic stroke and which cough till now never return'd since. Docr. Jones was again more astonish'd than ever by this *second* resurrection. I hope, *he allows* me to hope it probable that *he may* again rise to his usual level of health; feeble at best, but not diseased.

"Yours affectionately,

"A. Seward.

"Excuse the excessive deformity of this hurried letter."

Canon Seward survived his doctor's pessimism and treatment no less than four years. At the time, Dr. Jones disdained the consolatory phrase: "While there is life, there's hope". In the letter to Newton, however, Miss Seward exclaims: "But my friend, what a resurrection at seventy-eight! Dr. Jones is astonished, and says he shall never again despair while he sees a patient respire".

It is safe to assume that subsequent correspondence was destroyed, since but one letter to Mrs. Martin published in October 1790 bridges the next six years. The sole exception, written to Mr. Martin, is dated April 1792. He was her first cousin, and is therefore addressed more familiarly than his wife.

*"Lichfield. April 2d, 1792.*

"My dear Cousin,

It was with great concern that I received yesterday morning, from Miss Vyse, an account of your beloved Jane's health, wh. destroyed the expectation of seeing you both during the course of that day. Sincerely and warmly do I hope that the quiet of Sodbury may produce the good effect of wh. the Bath Waters have disappointed you. . . .

"Poor Mrs. Stokes has lost the lovely little Girl, wh. you saw at her House. She wrote to me the next day in the deepest anguish of spirit. She had set her whole heart on that Child—her first *Girl*, the blessing for wh. she had longed. It lived in her arms; I never saw so unwearied a Nurse. It was a fair blossom of sensibility and smiling sweetness of temper—Most pathetically does she exclaim in her letter—"My arms are empty, my heart is desolated". *These* are the trials that make me rejoice in, instead of bewailing my Virginity. . . .

"I am—, my dear Cousin,

"Your faithful & obliged Friend

"A. Seward."

Her candor falls oddly on modern ears. Today the woman of forty-four does not so confess herself to male cousins, nor so naïvely admit the grapes are sour. She had her affairs:

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a fleeting passage with Vyse, who jilted her; with a young soldier called Taylor, whose devotion apparently outlasted his marriage to another; a deep attachment to Dr. Darwin, a still deeper to Mr. Saville. On his death in 1803, under the pressure of sorrow, she courts "Fancy as the friend of woe". It would be unkind to quote more than two lines of the epitaph she wrote in verse for this, her dearest friend. They run:

Sleep, then, pale mortal frame, in yon low shrine,
Till angels wake thee with a note like thine!

The final words are Dr. Johnson's. Imagination refused to supply Miss Seward with any equally applicable. The great man's step-son-in-law, Porter, wooed her in vain after the death of her sister, to whom he had been engaged. But opportunity to marry the chosen was denied her, and so, in 1792, she wistfully rejoiced in her Virginity.

The last of these new-found originals, written eleven years after the one to Mr. Martin, reveals a melancholy lady of fifty-five, perturbed for her country and herself, still eager to judge, still preoccupied with births, marriages and deaths. She was not ashamed to move with the shifting currents of political events. Thus to Mrs. Powys in 1792, dreading seditious infection from France, Miss Seward writes: "'Equality'—'the majesty of the people?' Dazzling, intoxicating sounds!—Yes, it is thus that the passions of the vulgar and the ignorant are inflamed, till the hewers of wood, drawers of water, and tillers of soil pant to be senators; and fine work they make of legislation".

Her grasp of essentials and intelligent prevision are manifest in the following letter:

*"Lichfield. March 24th, 1803.*

"My dear Mrs. Martin,

I have been very ill since I received your sad record of double deprivation, or had more immediately condoled with you. . . . I caught so violent a chill and inflammation on my lungs, that I think it has been the utmost effort of my time worn constitution . . . and thus I write in pain, while I spare you of my sympathy in your filial and sisterly sorrow. Alas! it is always too soon to lose a kind and dear Parent. I thought so when mine shrank from me with every strength of body and mind long lost. . . .

"I am much afraid we are on the eve of another War, which will mean all the miseries of the last, and to no better purpose than *that* proved, for which we sustained them. National honor is much in the mouths of our Senators, but it will be *themselves*, not France, that will stain it, if we refuse to fulfil the Treaty that we have *signed*. It is now too late to repent its conditions. The Consul says, it is Peace or War as Malta is evacuated on promise, or detained by breach of Treaty. This declaration will for ever place the renewal of Hostilities at the door of England. When we are smarting beneath self-increased miseries, books will be written to prove that France, not England, renewed them;—and their sophistries will be swallowed in defiance of recollection, and in blindness to Truth. I had . . . better hopes of Mr. Addington than that he wou'd rescind from his Treaty. . . . If Pitt did not give John Bull enough of *confiding* he is a blind Brute indeed!"

Miss Seward's prediction has been shrewdly fulfilled. Historians blame French aggression. Anna forsakes these high matters for those intimate preoccupations in which her virginal soul delights.

"Mr. & Mrs., and Thomas Hinckley, are lately returned from a visit to Town to Mrs. Harper. No *maternal* symptoms as yet—but much content of situation, cheerfulness of spirits, and a somewhat more than desirable propensity to plumpness. Mr. Hinckley had an alarming erisypelas on returning home, but it went off without bad consequence.

"Your sincere Friend,

"A. SEWARD."

Anna had herself long suffered from more than an undesirable tendency to plumpness,

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brought on by an accident in youth which permanently restricted her exercise. This gentle tap of the paw was, let us hope, sympathy rather than malice; her prejudice against Johnson was largely based on his discourtesies.

It was asserted earlier that her letters contain wit, sense and reasoned criticism. Perhaps her own disquisition on wit to Dr. Mansel will help to establish that claim. It follows:

"Wit has certainly more to do with art than nature. Nature is simple, but wit is combined. . . . Least of all do Pope's lines—

> True wit is nature to advantage drest,
> What oft was thought but ne'er so well express'd—

apply to wit, since if the attempt express'd do not strike and surprise, it is not wit. . . . New thoughts, or at least new combinations of thoughts, are the very essence of wit." A ten line definition in verse follows of which one is worth remembering:—"The bright collision of an agile thought".

Her sense has been amply demonstrated; and, now, it must be confessed that her faculty for reasoned criticism amounts to a vice. One friend after another is weighed down, overborne, silenced; as arguments cool, the warmth of intercourse lessens.

As a literary critic, she lacked the grace of being occasionally in the wrong and produced chapter and verse—nay, chapters and chapters, verses and verses, till dead horses, flogged to rebellious feet, staggered up revivified and tottered away. Perhaps it is only fair to give one or two examples of reasoned and reasonable criticism.

"It would be difficult for me to be pleased with a tragedy in prose. . . . Its advocates say it is more like real life; wax-work is more like real life than painting, but is it therefore better?"

Writing to the ineffable author of *Edwy and Edilda*, she says of Mrs. Radcliffe: "Attentive only to terrific effects, she bestows no care upon their causes, and rashly cuts the knot of probability which she seems to want patience to untie. One has heard of a labouring mountain bringing forth a mouse: in Mrs. R's writings mice bring forth mountains".

It was a way they had, in those gallant and posturing days, when mutual admiration societies crowned themselves with myrtle wreaths and all the geese were Swans.

But all the Swans were not geese.

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# THE THEATRE

## UNDERSTANDING THE RECENT OPENINGS

*by Francis Fergusson*

It is impossible, in a monthly chronicle of the theatre, to keep one's readers, if any, competently posted on current entertainments. For this they must be referred to the reviews in the dailies which come hot off the griddle night by night; to the first-hand reports of their friends, and to the various confidential guides to shows. By comparison with these, a monthly chronicle is bound to seem a little remote. The writer has had time to digest his first impressions. Unless he arbitrarily picks one "play of the month", he is faced with the problem of writing up several shows from a more or less consistent point of view, and the temptation is to describe the point of view instead of the shows.

In the effort to avoid undue theorizing on one side and newspaper reviewing on the other, I have gathered, this month, a mixed bouquet consisting of Eva Le Gallienne, Ethel Barrymore, *This Is New York*, and *Grand Hotel*. Who shall say whether these two ladies, or their contemporaries, the two tabloid thrillers, are nearer the center of our theatrical life? To some Miss Le Gallienne and Miss Barrymore might seem to have a slightly antiquarian flavor. To others, the two strictly Broadway plays might appear ephemeral vulgarities: distressing but unimportant. Instead of searching for a private basis of judgment I have chosen to present the data and let the reader make his own deductions.

### *Miss Le Gallienne's Openings*

At this writing Miss Le Gallienne has presented three new productions since the beginning of the season: *The Green Cockatoo*, by Arthur Schnitzler; *Siegfried*, by Jean Giraudoux, and *Alison's House*, by Susan Glaspell. *The Green Cockatoo* was an unfortunate choice. It is a tragi-comedy of the eve of the French Revolution, and to be realized on the stage would require a good director to drill the hungry mob and actors skilled in Viennese love-making to play the nobles. The Civic Repertory Theatre lacks both elements. It shines in gentle, light, domestic comedy, like *The Lady from Alfaqueque*, where no gymnastics either physical or spiritual are required. Nobody can produce this species of mild delight so well as Miss Le Gallienne; and she was wise, in her other two openings, to seek a wider field for her special gift of genteel subtlety.

*Siegfried* is genteel, in a way, and extremely subtle. M. Jean Giraudoux appears to have absorbed the naturalistic technique of Vildrac, for instance, or Jean Jacques Bernard; and this play, as well as his *Amphitryon 38*, shows the delicacy, the exactness, and perhaps the sentimentality of the naturalistic tradition. But his characters besides being real people lovingly observed and recorded are also symbols of some wider meaning. The present play is about a German



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nationalist politician; a mystery man of unknown origin. A German woman discovered him wounded and with his memory lost after one of the battles of the Great War; she reclaimed him, persuaded him he was a German, and that his mission was to save Germany. But he was actually a Frenchman, and when the play opens his former mistress has come to take him back to France, by recalling his French memories and feelings. The action of the play is the conflict between his French and his German mistress for the possession of Siegfried. In working out this theme M. Giraudoux manages to make us believe both in his characters as people and in the several symbolic meanings he attaches to each. Even if the ideas behind this play date in a few years M. Giraudoux will have made an interesting experiment in dramatic technique.

Faced with the alluring possibilities of this script, Miss Le Gallienne's troupe, as a producing organization, failed us again. The play has delicacy, indeed, perhaps gentility, but it depends on making thought dramatic. It is a verbose play; but if the actors could "make believe" the words, the words would come alive for us. What they actually do is to stand with their hands hanging awkwardly at their sides and sturdily speak out their two or three paragraphs of uncomprehended monologue. I remember Mr. Egon Brecher mumbling interminably; Mr. Ben Ami trying to be impressive in a tight coat; and Miss Le Gallienne arguing like a lawyeress where she should have soothed and suggested.

Is this because the play is French? The translation sounds pretty inept, and we have heard that only French actors can do a French play. M. Maurice Pagnol's delightful *Marius*, translated as *Marseilles* and produced by Mr. Gilbert Miller, failed a month or so ago. On the other hand *Topaze*, also by M. Pagnol, succeeded last year. It is not so much the Frenchiness of the French as their cultivation and background that makes them hard for us. Part of our stern credo in this country has always been that the theatre is only the show business; and Miss Le Gallienne has not escaped the consequences of this general belief by starting her own theatre.

However, she does a far better job with Miss Glaspell's *Alison's House*. The play is nearer to what we all know. It is about a well-bred Middle-Western family, one of whose members was a great poetess about 1870. The play is laid on New Year's Eve, 1899, and depicts the collapse of the family tradition, the selling of the house, and the handing over of Alison's most intimate poems and papers to the vulgarians of the new century. The play is full of good ideas, mostly derived, it seems, from Chekhov. The device of using the physical house to indicate the destruction of a tradition reminds one of *The Cherry Orchard*; there is a vulgar sister-in-law like Natasha in *Three Sisters*. But Miss Glaspell does not have so much to say as Chekhov, and in her effort to fill out his large pattern she becomes terribly repetitious before the three acts are over.

Miss Le Gallienne's company is convincing as the hopeless, gentle relatives of the great dead. Miss Hutchinson, as the sister-in-law, is far better than I have seen her before. But the whole company is so at home in the afterglow of family life that it is hard to be sure whether their success here is due to their actors' art or to the good old methods of type-casting. But we must be grateful to them for producing an interesting play, which they are better equipped to do than anyone else in town.

### *Miss Ethel Barrymore in Blackface*

The interesting thing about *Scarlet Sister Mary* is of course Miss Barrymore. Julia Peterkin's novel does not make a play at all. E. M. Blyth, who is listed as the director, is not a director at all; and Miss Ethel Barrymore Colt is charming but not an actress.

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As for the other actors, several of them are competent to play white Broadway shows, but none of them is in the least inspiring, and they are quite helpless to deal with their black make-ups and their Negro dialect. Even Miss Barrymore fails to make us believe in the Negress she is supposed to be portraying; but while she does not create a character, she creates a situation, and fills it with a woman who is neither white nor black. And so, when we have ceased to bother about the play or the production, her performance is moving as only the hampered solo of a real artist can be moving.

It is not that Miss Barrymore failed to study her character intelligently. She has learned certain gestures and mannerisms which show that she has been watching Negroes: she has a sceptical-humorous way of spreading her hands helplessly, and she has tried to develop a joyous and spontaneous laugh, which, if she had only been able to let it come more freely, would have gone far toward establishing the Negress. At the climax, when Sister Mary is converted, she has planned a magnificent big scream or wail, which, if it only came off, should have made audible the very soul of the character. But it remains a technical feat. Even so, the intention is so imaginatively right that she nearly convinces us. And though unconvinced by the character, one is still moved by Miss Barrymore, whose artistic integrity and theatricality, in the good sense of the word, somehow come through even this inept play. Altogether, it is impossible not to be grateful to Miss Barrymore for this performance. It was not a mistake to try to depict a Negress even if there are Negro actresses who might have been more convincing: one should not ask to be convinced that way in the theatre. Indeed, Miss Barrymore proves thereby that she is on the right side of the distinction between exhibitionism and the art of acting. The pity of it is that she should not have found a company, a director, or a play.

*Cosmopolis*

While Miss Barrymore and Miss Le Gallienne were pursuing their separate courses, the show business was giving birth to two extremely contemporary plays about big cities. Mr. Herman Shumlin, the young producer who struck such a hit last season with his *The Last Mile*, did it again with *Grand Hotel*. He appears to have a flair for thrillers with highbrow overtones. And Mr. Arthur Hopkins, who is said to believe in falling in love with a script, casting to type, and letting nature take its course, came forward triumphantly with the new Robert E. Sherwood comedy, *This Is New York*. I am told that he and Mr. Jed Harris read this play at the same time, both spotted it for a hit, and raced. Mr. Hopkins won. If this is true it may indicate that producers sometimes know a hit when they see one, and that they are more like department-store buyers than players of the roulette wheel. In other words, they are only partly gamblers, and myopia and hubris are not the only qualities they need. Shrewdness and cynicism, according to this theory, would also be essential.

*Grand Hotel*

Vicki Baum, the German authoress of this nightmare, wrote a novel of the same name, but the program calls her the author of the play, so I take it she is responsible for the stage version. It was adapted from the German by William A. Drake. Let it be stated at once that they did a very good job. Not only is it exciting from start to finish, but innumerable small stories are skilfully interwoven, the doings of the guests of the Grand Hotel in Berlin over a period of thirty-six hours. And the production, neatly chopped by black-outs into many small scenes all over the hotel, manages to keep the intricate action clear while maintaining a hectic pace. The noises of the ceaseless jazz orchestra are well-managed, sometimes near and some-

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times far, helping to keep the frayed nerves aquiver. If Mr. Shumlin is responsible for these effects he is to be congratulated. I am told that there was a successful production of this play in Germany by Max Reinhardt, and Mr. Fritz Feld is listed as the assistant director.

I have called it a nightmare. If a melodrama is a play in which the forces of evil are crudely separated from the forces of good like black from white, then this is not a melodrama. The characters are seen as neither good nor bad, but as helpless and neurotic. A Russian dancer falls in love with a sleek society burglar who was trying to steal her pearls; a captain of industry tries to seduce a stenographer, but knows nothing about women. A clerk, with a little money and a mortal disease, tries to lead the high life for the rest of his days. The captain of industry murders the sleek burglar. Next morning the charwomen sweep out the guests with the cigar butts and the lint. All very true to life, no doubt, but not nearly so good as a phrase of Mr. Cummings's: "Pity and terror, incorporated: it all comes out in the wash".

The acting is sometimes very good of its rather cynical kind; notably in certain scenes by Mr. Sam Jaffe, who plays the clerk; in some of the less violent moments by Mr. Siegfried Rumann, who plays the captain of industry; and in nearly the whole part of Grusinskaia, played by Madame Eugénie Leontovitch. Miss Hortense Alden, as the stenographer, is much better than she was in *Lysistrata*. In a play like this, which exploits for its own box-office purposes the centerless cosmopolitanism of the times, the evils of type-casting become an important means of expression. We are very lucky that the types selected for this gladatorial combat, or tabloid murder with photos, are in some cases actors also. It is not they, it is the play which is pernicious, with its *Mittel-Europäische* pretentiousness, its undigested and aggressive glooms.

### *This Is New York*

Mr. Hopkins's show escapes the melancholy fate of *Grand Hotel* by way of the happy American wisecrack, and the sweet native wedding-bells finale. The story is the wooing of a Western Senator's daughter by the debauched son of an old New York family. The young lady investigates his associates in person, and in so doing runs into dope fiends, suicides, kept women, gangsters and publicity. Having assessed the whole situation with the business-like clarity of the stage flapper, she decides she likes New York, and will take the New York husband. The play is written with some gusto, and contains many references to Walter Winchell, Brooks Atkinson, and other things which good New Yorkers have in common. The sketches of the horrified Senator and his wife are very funny when they are not too bitter. The settings by Henry Dreyfuss are excellent. Colyumist and modernistic furniture seem capable of yielding a mysterious pleasure when discussed by the witty Mr. Sherwood in public.

Mr. Hopkins, if he left the play alone in rehearsal as he is supposed to do, made a mistake; for the tempo is monotonous, and most of the lines are spoken without meaning. The acting is on the whole disappointing. Mr. Raymond Bramley as the Tammany judge and Mr. Robert Barrat as the master-bootlegger are fortunate exceptions. The New York aristocrat is played by Mr. Geoffrey Kerr, with a slight cockney twang. Is this fact of any sociological significance?

I believe I should have preferred to see Mr. Jed Harris get this script and bang it into life with his burlesque heightening and timing.

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# LANDMARKS OF OUR LANGUAGE

*by Lyman Beecher Stowe*

ENGLAND is "the most island of the ocean and is biclipped all about by sea and departed from the roundness of the world and hyght (called) sometimes Albion and had that name from white rocks that were before in the sea, cliffs, and in passing of time lords and noblemen of Troy, after that Troy was destroyed, made a navy and went thence and came to the cliffs of the aforesaid island and, by revelation of their God Pallas, as it is said, the Trojans fought with giants a long time that lived therein and overcame the giants both with craft and with strength. They conquered the island and named the land Britain by the name of Brutus that was prince of that coast."

This account of the settlement of England is quoted from presumably the first outline of universal knowledge ever written. The manuscript was written by the famous teacher of Paris, Bartholomeus Anglicus, sometimes called Glanville, between 1230 and 1250. It was translated into English, or "Englished", as stated on the manuscript, by John de Trevisa in 1398. It is entitled *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (Concerning the Properties of Things), and was one of the most curious and beautiful of the objects in Mr. George A. Plimpton's collection of manuscripts and early printed books, so arranged as to illustrate the formation of the English language, and recently exhibited at the Grolier Club in New York.

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This is a huge manuscript book written on vellum and exquisitely illuminated. In quoting I have, of course, with one or two exceptions, modernized the spelling. The book opens with matters of real importance such as the attributes of God; the angels and the archangels and the organization of the hierarchy of Heaven. The author next concerns himself with the elements such as fire and water, then mountains, with special reference to those mentioned in the Scriptures, and finally such comparatively unimportant matters as the settlement of England, the opening of which is quoted above.

Mr. Plimpton's exhibition was divided into eight periods, covering the first sixteen centuries of the Christian era. For the first period, before the Roman conquest of Britain, there was no literature, and Mr. Plimpton showed some plates from Clark's *Caesar*. These imaginatively portrayed the Druids, the Picts and the Scots.

The second period, that of the Roman control of the British Isles (49 B.C. to A.D. 415), was illustrated with manuscripts of the great Latin authors: Caesar, Cicero, Virgil, Ovid, Tacitus, Terence and Seneca. To use an Irish bull, the English literature of this early period was exclusively Roman. It is startling to realize that the Roman domination of Britain covered as long a stretch of time as separates us from the Middle Ages.

The third period (415 to 1013) is marked by the departure of the Roman legions and



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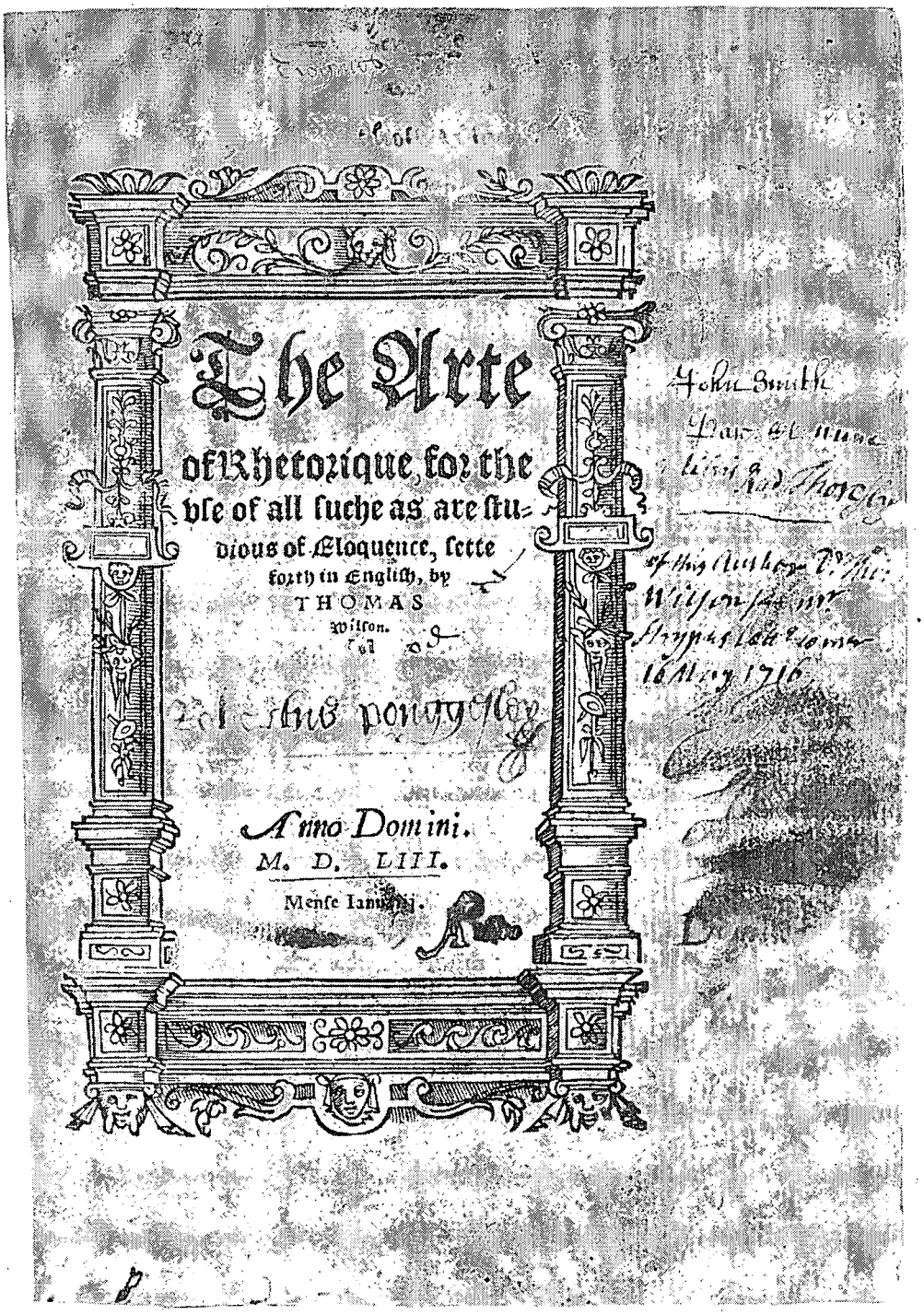


*From the Plimpton Collection.*

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the coming of the Angles and the Saxons. When the Roman army in 449 was finally withdrawn, the Picts, Scots and Celts promptly attacked the Romans who were left behind, with the result that the Romans were forced to call upon the Angles and the Saxons for assistance.

In 597 Pope Gregory the Great sent St. Patrick to Ireland and St. Augustine to Kent, England, to introduce Christianity. Both established monasteries throughout their territories. The Irish monasteries became especially noted for their scholarship. The most outstanding example of this Irish scholarship at the Grolier Club exhibition was a Gaelic manuscript by Isidore of Seville, who was born in 635. (Mr. Plimpton had the happy experience of buying this manuscript in the belief that it was a forgery and later having it authenticated by the expert, De Ricci.)

The famous Benedict of the monastery at Jarrow, in Northern England, had as his pupil the scholar who came to be known as "the Venerable Bede". Bede was born in 673, and became the first English prose writer, scholar and historian. A number of his manuscripts on mathematics, astronomy and history were shown. The Venerable Bede's pupil, Alcuin, because of his scholarly attainments, was called to the Court of Charlemagne. In 735, before leaving England, he writes his royal master-to-be a letter in which he gives him a list of the principal manuscripts in York Cathedral at that time. It would be interesting to know whether Charlemagne asked for this information or whether Alcuin furnished it of his own volition. This letter was exhibited; and it names the following works: The Church Fathers, Virgil, Cicero, Juventicus, Lactantius, Statius, Lucan, Boethius, Priscian, Cicero's Rhetoric and Donatus. The last was a Latin grammar which achieved the distinction, something over seven hundred years later, of becoming the world's first printed book. About 1448 it was printed by Gutenberg and preceded, common report to the contrary notwithstanding, the famous Gutenberg Bible. For over a thousand years boys conned this manuscript and used to ask one another, "Have you done your 'Donat'?"

During this period the Anglo-Saxons were scattered throughout England. Four Anglo-Saxon manuscripts were an important part of the Grolier display: *Widsith, Finnesburh, Waldere* and *Beowulf*, although the last named was merely a facsimile of the original, which is in the British Museum. These works are all in verse.

The next period (849 to 901) was dominated by King Alfred the Great. During this half-century he himself translated for the enlightenment of his subjects Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, *The Sermon on the Mount* and manuscripts by the Venerable Bede, Isidore of Seville and St. Augustine. Somewhat later King Alfred translated a manuscript of poetry with this explanatory comment: "Learning had fallen so low that there were few on this side of the Humber who could understand the church services or even turn a Latin letter into English". When it is recalled that King Alfred lived in the days when a king was a king and did his own ruling, it is little short of miraculous that he could have found the time for these laborious literary achievements.

Two Danish manuscripts, one dealing with religions and the other with laws, illustrated the conquest and settlement of England by the Danes from 1013 to 1042.

Manuscripts of laws in Latin and French, *The Romance of the Rose,* Bruneti Latine's *Natural History*, *The Game of Chess, The True Order of Chivalry*, a French horn-book, French Laws of Normandy from Edward III to Henry IV, and, finally, a Bull issued by Pope Innocent in 1202, illustrated the fifth period (1066 to 1265). That was, of course, the time of the Norman Conquest, when William the Conqueror introduced French as the language of the Court and the nobility. It was Pope Innocent who preached

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the last sermon in the Crusades and it was he who excommunicated King John. This particular Bull was directed against the inhabitants of St. Omer in France.

The next period (1265 to 1400) was one in which Latin was the language of scholars and Anglo-Saxon that of the common people. This was illustrated by the Bartholomeus Anglicus or Glanville manuscript, a quotation from which opens this article. There were also two religious manuscripts by the mystics Richard Rolle and Walter Hylton, as well as a *History of England* in Latin and some verses entitled "Meditation" by St. Bernard, in both English and Latin. There was also a manuscript by John Mandeville, one of the first prose writers in English. And, perhaps most important of all, a manuscript by Marco Polo, who at this time brought to England the first tidings of China and the Orient. In this section also was displayed a letter from Alexander the Great to his former tutor, Aristotle, describing the geography and the marvels of India. This letter was translated from Greek into Latin near the close of the third century. Towards the end of this letter, written in an English hand in Gothic characters in the first half of the eleventh century, are three leaves containing a fragment of St. Patrick's *Legend of Purgatory*. In this group was also a manuscript by Roger Bacon in which he says: "There may be flying machines so made that a man may sit in the middle of the machine and direct it by some device".

The next group of manuscripts included Wyclif's Bible, a *History of England, The Black Art, The Canterbury Pilgrims,* and an account of the astrolabe written by Chaucer for the enlightenment of a favorite pupil (the astrolabe was the instrument which preceded the quadrant and sextant to ascertain longitude at sea). Here also were John Lithgate's *Fall of the Princes*, John Ludgate's *Sapiens* and the first primer ever prepared to teach children the English language.

During this period, in 1362, the English language was used for the first time to open Parliament. And at the same time by royal decree English was substituted for French as the language of the courts and of the schools. The transition is thus quaintly referred to in a manuscript called *Higden Polychronicom*, which was translated by John de Trevisa in 1385: "John Cornwaille, a master of gramere changed the lore in gramere scole and construction of French into Englishe and Richard Penchriche learned the manere of teaching hym and others so that now year of our Lorde a thousand three hundred four score and five of the Seconde of King Richard after the Conquest syne the gramere scoles of England children leveth French and construeth and lerneth in Englische".

And finally came the last period, beginning with 1477 and coming up to the early seventeenth century. In this group were examples of the first books printed by Caxton, the first English printer. Among them were a book on logic by Sir Thomas Wilson (1567), which was the first book on that subject to be printed in English. There was also a book entitled *Orthographic*, by John Hart (1569), which was the first English book on orthography. On the third page of this book the author makes some suggestions for new and different letters. He suggests, for example, substituting *ei* for *l* and finally makes this very human comment: "Yet I know that some, at the first opening of the book, and seeing of the strange figures and manner of writing, will say, 'What! shall we now be set to school again, even to our A B C? Then had we lived too long!' "

Then there was a dictionary with this delightfully confidential explanatory title page: "The English Dictionarie, or an Interpreter of Hard English Words, enabling as well Ladies and Gentlewomen, Young Scholiers, Clerks, etc. to understand difficult authors already printed in our language, by H. C. Cockman. The seventh edition, revised and

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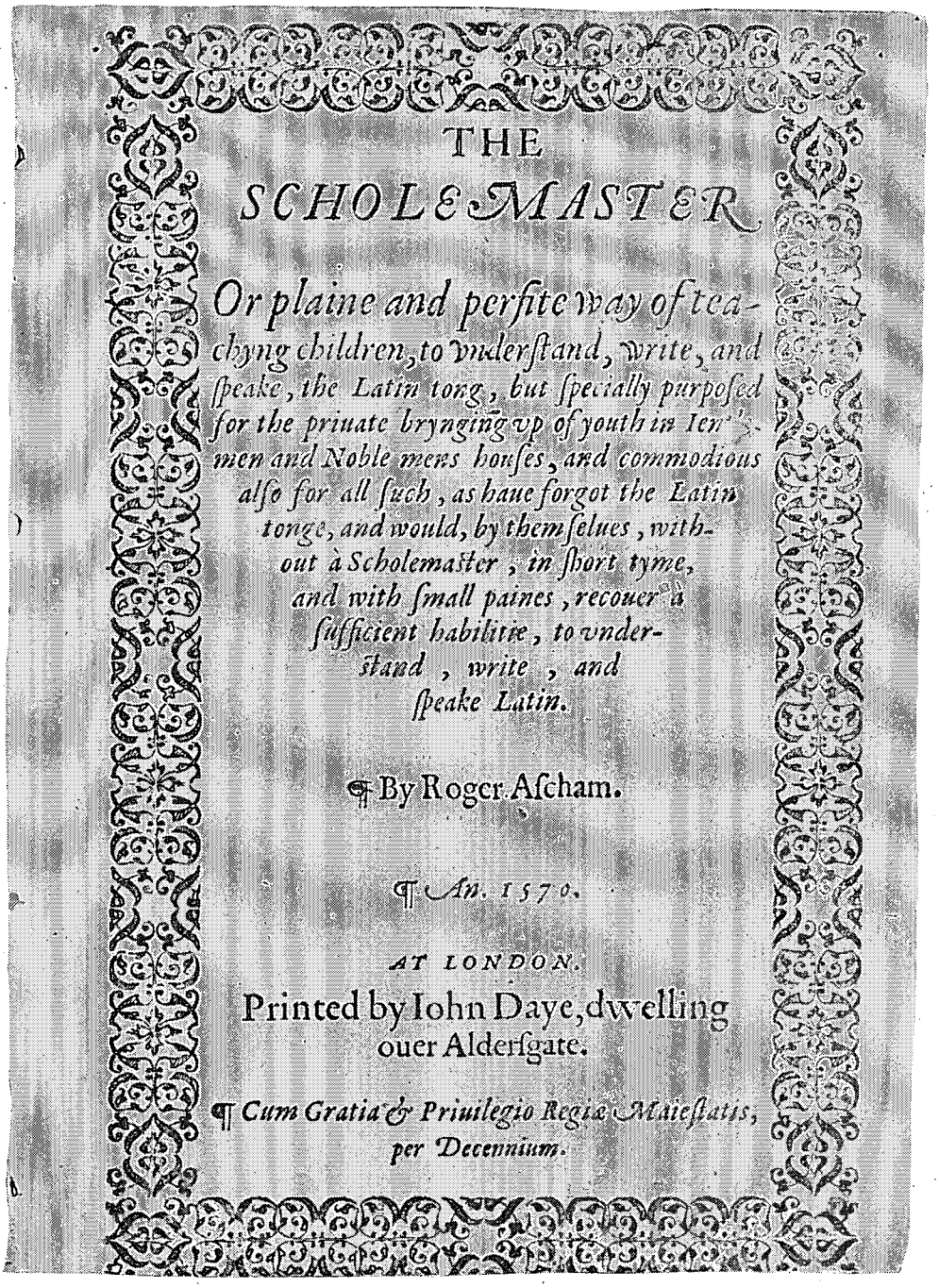

THE

SCHOLE-MASTER

*Or plaine and perfite way of teachyng children, to vnderſtand, write, and ſpeake, the Latin tong, but ſpecially purpoſed for the priuate brynging vp of youth in Ientlemen and Noble mens houſes, and commodious alſo for all ſuch, as haue forgot the Latin tonge, and would, by themſelues, without a Scholemaſter, in ſhort tyme, and with ſmall paines, recouer a ſufficient habilitie, to vnderſtand, write, and ſpeake Latin.*

¶ By Roger Aſcham.

¶ *Anno.* 1570.

*AT LONDON.*

Printed by Iohn Daye, dwelling ouer Alderſgate.

¶ *Cum Gratia & Priuilegio Regiæ Maieſtatis, per Decennium.*

*From the Plimpton Collection.*

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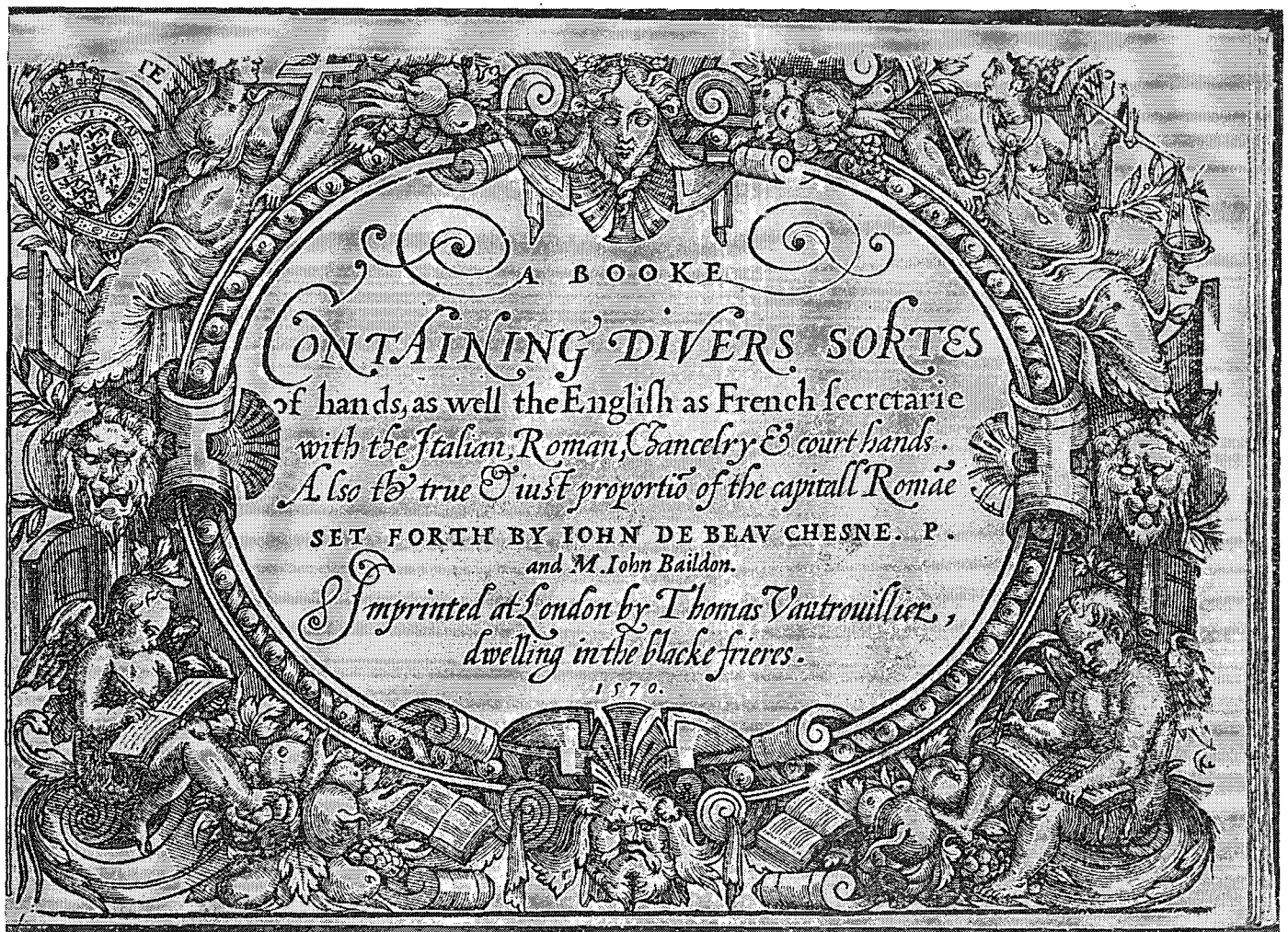


*From the Plimpton Collection.*

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enlarged. London 1642". This was the most modern book in the exhibition. As this was the seventh edition, evidently the Gentlewomen, Scholiers and Clerks took full advantage of this opportunity for assistance in understanding "difficult authors". It was apparently in its day and class something of a best-seller.

The first thesaurus in the English language was also in this group, *The Thesaurus Linguae* by Thomas Cooper (1573). It is dedicated to Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Queen Elizabeth so admired the book that she procured for the author the Bishopric of London. There was, too, Sir Thomas Wilson's *Rhetoric*, the second book on that subject to be printed in English, and a book which Shakespeare not only read but used professionally. It is said, in fact, that it suggested to him a number of his scenes and characters. The following instance, cited by Wilson is, according to professor George H. McKnight in his book *Modern English in the Making*, the possible suggestion for the pompous legal jargon of Dogberry: "'An officer and Maior of a toune' in rebuking a 'runnegate fellowe' said in great heat: 'Thou yngrame and vacation knaue, if I take thee any more within the circumcision of my dampnation: I will so currup thee, that all other vacation knaues shall take ilsample by thee'".

There were in this group four other books on teaching. Mr. Plimpton, as the head of the great educational book house of Ginn & Company, is naturally especially interested in books of this character, and hence his library is particularly notable in this field. One of these books was *The Boke Named the Gouvenor* by Thomas Elyot (1557) which sets forth what children of high degree should be taught and how. Another issued in the same year was Vives's *Instruction of a Christian Woman*. Vives was brought to England by Catherine of Aragon to be tutor to her daughter, the Princess Mary, who subsequently as Queen won the the gruesome title of "Bloody Mary". This book was written for her especial edification. Then there was Brinsley's *The Grammar School* (1612) Mulcaster's *Concerning the Training of Children* (1581), and Roger Ascham's *School Master* (1570). These four books, with Wilson's *Rhetoric*, had a profound influence on the development of the English language. They were the first English books to indicate what should be taught young people and how it should be taught. They might be called the basic books in education in the English-speaking world. I had assumed, however, until I read the latest edition of Ascham's *School Master* published in 1815, that educational books of such antiquity could have a curious interest only for the modern reader. But after reading some such passages as follow I decided that Ascham's ideas have more than a curious interest for us: he quotes Socrates as saying, "'No learning ought to be learned with bondage: for bodily labours, wrought by compulsion, hurt not the body; but any learning learned by compulsion, tarrieth not long in the mind.' . . . Fond schoolmasters neither can understand, nor will follow, this good counsel of Socrates; but wise riders in their office can and will do both; which is the only cause that commonly the young gentlemen of England go so unwillingly to school, and run so fast to the stable. For in very deed, fond schoolmasters, by fear, do beat into them the hatred for learning; and wise riders, by gentle allurements, do breed up in them the love of riding". That sounds, to the lay mind, at least, like a sound modern pedagogical view of the matter.

Later the author is advocating that Latin and Greek, or indeed any language, can best be taught by constant exercise in translating into English and from English into the other tongue rather than by the study of grammar. And he cites as a demonstration of the success of his method the attainments of his one-time pupil, Queen Elizabeth. He says:

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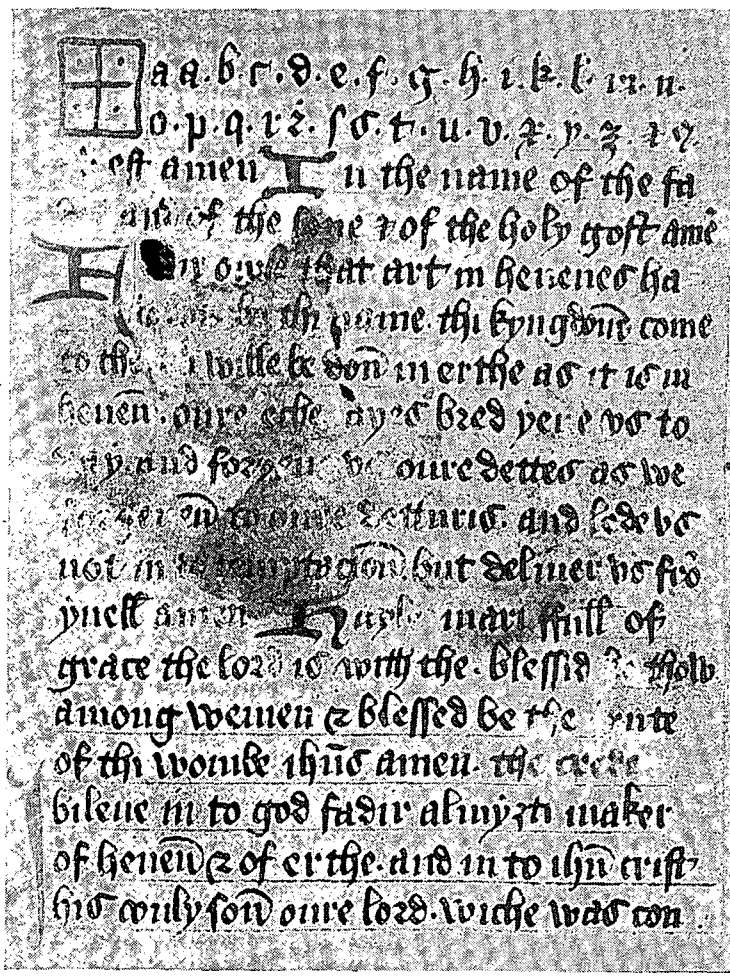
"Our most noble Queen Elizabeth, who never took yet Greek nor Latin grammar in her hand, after the first declining of a noun and a verb; but only by this double translating of Demosthenes and Isocrates daily, without missing, every forenoon, and likewise some part of Tully every afternoon, for the space of a year or two, hath attained to such a perfect understanding in both the tongues, and to such ready utterance of the Latin, and that with such a judgment, as they be few in number in both the universities, or elsewhere in England, that be in both tongues comparable with Her Majesty".

As I left Mr. Plimpton's exhibition it seemed to me very remarkable that manuscripts and books from the library of one man could so illuminate the landmarks in the development of our language.



*Primer or Lesson Book for Children (ABECEDARIUM). Fourteenth-century English manuscript, on vellum. Begins with the Alphabet, followed by "In the name of the fader, and of the sone, and of the holy gost, amen". Two or three similar little books for children were printed in the fourteenth century. (From the Plimpton Collection.)*

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# THE CIVILIZED MAN

## *by Robert Shafer*

THE AUTHOR of this short book* has recently attracted much attention because of several essays published in English periodicals. One of these was republished in THE BOOKMAN for April-May, 1930, under the title, "The Roots of Tragedy". Mr. McEachran has now taken up a large question suggested in this essay, and asks what, in his constant qualities, is a civilized man; and what, especially, are the enduring elements in the philosophy, art, and religion of the civilized man? Deeply influenced by the books of Professor Irving Babbitt, Mr. McEachran is also a thoughtful and widely-read student of ancient and modern literature—he took a First Class in the Modern Language School at Oxford—and he has worked out his answer along a line which, though suggested and in a sense controlled by Professor Babbitt's thought, is still distinctly his own. It is an answer at once simple and weighty, as will be seen.

Man, we are told, is an animal—yet something different too, which really makes him man. How this can be is a persistent question, but not one of the first importance. There are a number of things we want to know to which the answers, or at any rate the complete answers, are denied us. And our boundless curiosity is often idle in more than one sense. That which *is* of the first importance is faithfulness to the given fact, attested by an overwhelming weight of recorded experience—the given fact that man, though an animal, is also something different. It is by this fact, indeed, that we recognize man in history. How long man has lived upon the earth we do not know, because we can learn of man's past only from his "works", in so far as they remain behind him. And even amongst "works" only those which are literary or artistic speak to us quite plainly—tell us, in other words, beyond doubt that beings whom we can recognize as complete men must have made them. Such "works" survive from various epochs, going back not much more than about three thousand years. Several of these epochs are peculiarly rich in "works" which, by the general consent of many generations, reach an absolute height of perfection in their kinds; and which, too, exhibit an underlying similarity, or even sameness, of import compelling us to see a constant element characteristic of the complete man. These epochs are called, *par excellence,* epochs of culture, and the men responsible for them, civilized men.

The constant element characteristic of civilized men, informing their philosophy, art, and religion, is "a dualism of nature which other creatures do not possess". This dualism, so far as it is present in us today, makes us sure that we "could achieve human contact to an unlimited extent with the Greeks, Romans, medieval Europeans and Renais-

* *The Civilized Man*, by F. McEachran, London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1930. 7s. 6d.



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sance Italians, the Chinese of Confucius's age, the Elizabethans, and the French of the age of Louis XIV". We are equally sure that we could achieve only a very limited human contact with certain other peoples of other periods, or none at all with still other creatures which, nevertheless, are physically man-like—with the Pygmies of central Africa, for instance, or with anthropoid apes. There is, in short, an identity of character which links together in an enduring society certain men of all generations through the last three thousand years or more, which has at various times risen to an extraordinary height of perfect expression, and which constitutes the universal element in man, linking him not only to his fellows but equally to a higher order of reality transcending natural limitations.

This identity of character may be readily explained. "The men we call civilized are free individuals living in a more or less free atmosphere, and capable, because of this freedom they possess, of building up a civilized state. Because they are to some extent free they can make the distinction which is peculiarly human between what is the ideal of truth, scientific or other, and what 'ought to be', the ideal of the will and of human ethics. These distinctions correspond to the dualism just briefly mentioned, by virtue of which free men do not regard the truth of nature as necessarily right, but seek for themselves, often against nature, something which they hold to be still more right, which itself is the mark of their civilization." Freedom of choice, limited but real, making them responsible beings, motivated by an ethical dualism—a sense which experience and knowledge heighten, instead of dulling, of the contrast between "what is" and "what ought to be";—these are the marks of the civilized man.

It may be said that this dualism—this awakened sense of the contrast between "what is" and "what ought to be"—is the basis of all those superficial changes which make up what the vulgar man of our time calls "progressive civilization". Obedient to the Baconian dictum that knowledge is power, we have increased our control over the order of nature with admittedly marvellous results, "improving on nature" for the better satisfaction of our desires in so many ways that we are encouraged to think nothing of this kind ultimately impossible. But the truth is that this is a degradation of dualism which sets up an unreal division within the order of nature—which assumes that man naturally is what he ought to be, and that all will be made right by altering things—and other men, it should not be forgotten—to suit his ever-expanding demands upon his environment. In thus externalizing dualism man becomes the slave of his impulses and desires, while, at the same time, deludedly making himself the object of his own worship, and allowing even social morality to evaporate in an easy-going sentimentalism. Undeniably this has been the path of our "progress" in recent years, and we can see whither it leads—to despotism, the inevitable government of demoralized barbarians. And "so the world sinks, without being aware of it, from Plato and Thomas Aquinas to Dewey and Freud, the civilized man to the uncivilized".

The dualism of nature which has always marked the former, the civilized man, is of a radically different kind. It is, as was said, an ethical dualism—an inner sense of the contrast between what a man himself is and what he ought to be. Bound by his creatureliness to the natural order, the civilized man steadfastly refuses to accept that order as his end, his eye fixed upon a divine order which alone he recognizes as the reason of his being, immeasurably removed from it though he is. It is that vision which constitutes him something other than an animal, making his nature dual. But because he is bound to the natural order, he can only obey his better self in ways which the world calls negative. Yet that seemingly negative activity it is

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which, restraining his impulses and desires, thus gives form and positive content to what he knows is most valuable within him. And so he comes to possess a standard of right and of excellence, and a scale of values. Hence, by virtue of this discipline of restraint, the judicious man, or the man of character, is born. Hence, too, arises that circumscription of spontaneous expression which is art in the true or civilized sense of the word. And this art in its highest reaches has ever been tragic art—the expression of the inevitable defeat which attends man's conflict with the natural order. Thus the tragic hero is the enduring type of the life of civilized man on earth—a life ending in a species of defeat which magnificently attests, as nothing else can, the dignity and worth of a complete humanity.

The spectacle of tragic defeat, then, is one which never leaves us sunk in despair; on the contrary, the final note of tragedy is one "of immeasurable hope". In the most profound tragedy of history we have to recognize that, "but for the manner of Jesus' death, his perfection might hardly have been known". The serenity of the Greeks, Mr. McEachran thinks, is often misunderstood: it "is not joy or cheerfulness, but something which is more than joy and more than cheerfulness. It is the expression of men who have seen the worst and are not afraid, and whom the world has nothing more to teach. It is an expression of peace, the state of mind of men in whom will has triumphed over matter, and in whom the ideal human being, artistically and as an ideal portrayed, has come into being. This state of mind was not so intense among the Greeks as it became among the Christians, but they had it sufficiently for us to feel it even today. There is in their serenity the same peace which comes at the end of tragedy and which is the peace for which civilized men yearn;—the peace of Crito, who remarked to Socrates as the night fell which meant for him the end: 'I think, Socrates, the sun is still upon the mountains and has not yet set'".

In substance, this is Mr. McEachran's answer to his question. His analysis runs closely parallel to the work of some of his contemporaries in America, yet it is quite his own, and has distinctive qualities which give it a high value. In a sense, however, the book is valuable in its own despite. It is written simply, which is excellent; but it exhibits many small faults of expression which cannot solely be due to careless printing, and which cannot fail to annoy readers. It is written in good faith, and manifestly on a basis of solid learning—yet it offers many opportunities to the hostile critic, because of loose ends in the argument. It contains several acute observations concerning America, coupled with evidence of the observer's very limited knowledge of things American. After all, these and the like are only slight stains upon a thoughtful and important book, whose value lies not least in the clear proof it gives of the fruitfulness of American humanism as this is embodied in the writings of Professor Babbitt. For *The Civilized Man* impressively shows that Professor Babbitt's thought can stand the test of a new and comprehensive application, and that, indeed, his position is strengthened by it.

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# FICTION

THE VIRGIN AND THE GIPSY *by D. H. Lawrence* (KNOPF. $2.50)

WHILE some of the defects in this novel may be overlooked on the grounds that it is a posthumous work and that it never received revision at the hands of its author, it has infirmities which only the most inspired revision could have cured. To begin with, it is too close a replica of its notorious predecessor, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The similarity is fundamental. Both books are built upon what, for lack of an equivalent literary term, one must call a like design: the opposition of two sets of characters each representing an abstract principle. It is hardly necessary to say—so well-known are Lawrence's views—that these opposed principles are instinct and inhibition.

On one hand we have the dreary and lifeless personnel of an English village rectory, ruled ostensibly, though not in fact, by a rector who has been seized with such a distaste for life that he prefers to peer at it through his fingers—or rather, I should say, through the comfortingly small windows of the rectory. He submits shamelessly to the influence of his mother, a really hateful old octopus who, through flattery and through the cultivation of a sense of loyalty to herself, has succeeded in deifying her antique person in the eyes, not only of the rector, but of his spinster sister, his brother, and his two lively daughters, Lucille and Yvette. I might add in passing that the account of how this octopus-cult has come into being and how it operates upon its adherents is a good observation on the sometimes destructive effect of family "loyalties". I might also add that it is the *only* memorable observation in the novel, as Granny herself is the only memorable creation. The others are so spectral as to be inadequate to the fears, jealousies, desires and green rages which Lawrence so freely attributes to them.

In an alignment of characters as arbitrary as any puritan poet would have made between the good and bad angels, this troop of airless spirits is set against a gipsy and his family, whose minds are more reposed and muscles more elastic for the reason that they are governed, not by outmoded codes of morality, but by the infallible small voice of instinct. In fact, they live in such profound repose that their speech is limited to monosyllables, their activity to rippling their muscles. Lawrence's readers will recognize at once the parallel between the gipsies in the present novel and the gamekeeper in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The rôle of insurgent against the restrictions of English society, which Lord Chatterley filled in the earlier novel, is here taken by Yvette, the rector's daughter. She is seduced into rebellion, partly by her own instinctive dissatisfaction with life, but mainly by her lust for the inflammatory gipsy. But through the force of long repression she allows herself to be deterred from gratification by a minor interruption. Nor, in fact, does she ever become the gipsy's lover.

Our dissatisfaction with this novel is not likely to be directed primarily against either its teaching or its arbitrary division of character, but against its infirm and torpid execution. It is too thinly imagined, too much committed to literal representation, to float an idea of such weight and magnitude as that which Lawrence sought to express. Recalling his earlier successes, one is inclined to



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believe that as the preoccupation with sex grew upon his mind, it outgrew his imagination.

TOGETHER AGAIN *by Helen Grace Carlisle* (CAPE & SMITH. $2.00)

JUST as each new model of a motor-car must have a dashboard full of new dials and devices, no novel today is worth its ink and paper unless it has something in the way of a technical novelty, an experiment in form, or a new departure in punctuation. Miss Carlisle's contribution to the great body of experiment is the omission of people's names. Her three characters are simply designated by two pronouns and a noun: he, she, and the doctor.

*He* is a young man of rather passionate and perverse character, in love with *she*, a young woman of much the same character. Through early experience in the School of Hard Knocks, both have acquired a savagely hostile attitude towards the world. They trust no one, not even each other; and at college they are inclined to submit one another to tests of courage and endurance. Their wild and impulsive pranks put one in mind of what went on at Princeton in F. Scott Fitzgerald's day, when young people took long walks in the rain, reciting "Ulalume" in drunken voices, or threatened to ride over precipices just for a whim.

The romance is interrupted, after the graduation of the principals, by the presence of a doctor, in whose laboratory the girl finds employment. The doctor, a realist, a man of facts, cool, hard and indifferent, falls in love with the girl and exercises such a fascination over her that he not only succeeds in seducing her but in leading her over to war-torn France to work in a hospital. The boy follows, and difficulties ensue which result in grim tragedy for them all.

This breathless, dishevelled, and unbuttoned narrative owes less to life itself than to a rather flighty reading of Fitzgerald, Hemingway and O'Neill. The book is a clearing-house (or pawn shop) for much of the romantic psychology of the day. And it is so incoherently written and so noxious in its sentimentality that it cannot even be recommended as entertainment.

FREDERICK DUPEE

PORTRAIT BY CAROLINE *by Sylvia Thompson* (LITTLE, BROWN. $2.50)

IN *Portrait by Caroline* Sylvia Thompson tells a story as intense as her own unflinching insight; the people of the story move and speak and live, deeply, in the insistent helplessness of their present. Quite without strain, and with entire fidelity, one is admitted to intimacy with Caroline, Maurice and Peter in their world of upper-class English country and town. The intricately devised conflict of action and thought, the carefully recorded shadows of the mind, suggest that Miss Thompson has a more than casual liking for the problems of Henry James, Meredith, and Proust.

Miss Thompson delights in portraying the incongruity of reaction and fact as they appear against the background of things expected; moods rarely match and people are most matter-of-fact when they should be most sensitive. By innocent accident Caroline fails Maurice and Peter and herself.

Caroline is loved both by Maurice, her husband, and by Peter. Though she loves them both in return she cannot escape isolation, for as she tells Peter, "It isn't death that parts people, it's life". Caroline tries to face herself and her emotions, but honesty does not remove the triangle and in the end she tells Peter to go away.

Though *Portrait by Caroline* succeeds in dramatizing subtleties, it does not sacrifice the solidity of its characters to the fourth dimension of experience. The dialogue is sturdy (fortunately there is much of it) and the stream-of-consciousness passages are well

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controlled. The story is never given over to romanticism, modern or otherwise, and one feels that Sylvia Thompson hates "mean living and dull feeling" above all else. But it is not an entire surprise to find that the author of *The Hounds of Spring* is as uncompromising as she is skilful.

NANCY EVANS

A SHORT HISTORY OF JULIA *by Isa Glenn* (KNOPF. $2.00)

WITH *A Short History of Julia* Miss Glenn comes into her own. And a very good own it is that establishes her among the really valid novelists of her country. That is no small thing, the writers of her country standing now very high in the literature of the world.

One has followed Miss Glenn for a long time now—through the several *coups d'essai* the valid novelist must make. Real Minervas do not spring fully armed from the head of Jove and Miss Glenn has had to get several things out of her system before writing with the equanimity and skill that mastery demands. *Heat*, *Little Pitchers*, *Southern Charm* and *Transport* were all expressions of dislike—for Oriento-tropical conditions, for the restraints of army or of Southern life. What don't authentic novelists dislike and have to get out of their systems?

But *Julia*, for short, is a real projection of Southern life, observed and digested and therefore sympathetic. I daresay Miss Glenn may still react towards the South with as much dislike as she put into *Southern Charm*, with its ironical title, but in her latest book she has given a rendering of conditions—of a civilization. The renderings of a real artist are never lacking in comprehension and comprehension never wants for sympathy. Jeer as you may at Southern formalities or Southern magnifications of family, the South evolved a civilization that leaves its traces on today. That is a good thing for today. For any civilization is only an experiment in the onward march of humanity towards—towards what?

At any rate *Julia* is the *Une Vie* or the *Esther Waters* of, say, somewhere in Georgia. As in Maupassant's masterpiece or as in George Moore's you have here the hegira of two women across the conditions of a type-hardened world. The one is of the upper crust, the other a serf by condition, but in the end both are left, not without a common sympathy, gazing empty-handed into a void future. The two traditions, white and colored, here revolve side by side like two differing disks of the same machine—differing but none the less interdependent, upper and lower disks, but still indispensable the one to the other, and the one comprehending intimately the merits and the failings of the other. I do not know of any better projection of the lives side by side of two different races occupying the same territory. Indeed, I do not believe that there can be any better one. The Negroes in the background, like the old white civilization of whist-players who gradually evolve towards the iniquities of contract and have to tolerate the piquancies of the youths and maidens of today, both groups live with an equal vividness of drawing and of intimacy. Mammy Patty is as vivid and as tragic as Mrs. de Graffenried and the dark Cynthia as Julia *au clair visage*. If the men are mostly worthless and pompous about it—well, aren't we all, on the Royal Mail Ship *Mauretania* —where I happen to be writing this—as in Hoboken, or Pawtucket or in Atlanta. We wear it is true our pomps and littlenesses with less of an air than the Captain Rutherford or the Mr. Breckinridge who overshadowed poor Julia. But we are all much of a muchness, we men; and Mr. Breckinridge, who at the card party asks, "What is a gentleman?" and then falls heavily to the floor, lying on his face—he asks a question we might just as well ask before we lie down, on face or back, for good. It makes little odds whether we be of the South or the

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North, we are like that; and in our backgrounds sit our Julias and our Cynthias, gazing empty-handed into futures that we shall void. That is the touch of universality that all authentic novels must have. Having attained to it Miss Glenn is much to be congratulated. *Julia* is a very beautiful and a very touching book.

FORD MADOX FORD

## CLAUDINE AT SCHOOL *by Colette* (BONI. $2.50)

IT was with this book, published several years ago, in France, that Mme Colette burst into fame and notoriety. A story of schoolgirls and their affairs naturally has less popular appeal than such stories as *Chéri* and *Mitsou* which deal with more adult intrigue, and this is probably the reason why the later books were translated first. Their frank, popular, Gallic style has served however as introduction to this romance. Claudine is a well-bred provincial girl of fifteen whose father is interested only in snails and whose mother is dead. She goes to the town school, where she learns little of books and much of life. Mlle Aimée, the pretty eighteen-year-old teacher, arouses considerable emotion and even more curiosity in the young girl. But when Claudine finds that her adored one is also beloved by the woman principal—a "horrid red-head"—love turns to hatred, but the curiosity is sharpened. Poking and prying, this precocious girl cynically watches the two women. And she watches the courtship of the younger one by a stupid young man and she scents the true relationship between both the women and the school doctor. She revels in the confidences of her companion, the "big Anais" whom even Claudine enviously describes as vicious. She pinches and torments the younger sister of Mlle Aimée, who is a pupil at the school, egging on the perverted instincts of the child. The amorous doctor makes crude advances towards her and, although repelled by him, she is much flattered. The book ends with the graduation of Claudine and the disgrace of the doctor and one of his mistresses. The girl has learned everything about sex except its decency and nothing of friendship or love.

The book combines a freshness and great feeling for adolescence with an obsession with sex. There is an air of candor and authenticity which makes one accept the statement on the jacket that the story is autobiographical. The story is not presented as either an exposé of girlhood or French pedagogy. Girls and schools are carefully individualized. It would take great faith in the human race to make one say that, given the teachers and the influence of one really vicious girl like Anais, the situation might not crop up anywhere.

## THE ISLAND *by Naomi Royde-Smith* (HARPERS. $2.50)

THE jacket warns us that Miss Royde-Smith's theme is "delicate", treating as it does of the sex impulse turned from its legitimate outlet to more mysterious and only recently mentioned courses. "Goosey", the well nicknamed heroine of this extremely sensitive and very readable book, is first introduced in her formative adolescent years. She lives with an unsympathetic aunt and uncle on a Welsh farm. Spurned, ever so slightly, by a man to whom she has never even spoken, hypersensitive and provokingly docile and stupid, Goosey becomes the abject slave and admirer of a flashy town girl boarding at the farm, This contact, which at first seems an excellent thing for the gawky, unawakened young girl, proves to be her ruin. It is the consuming passion of her dull life, beside which everything else (like the millinery trade and an elderly courting widower) is dross. The story follows her through to the threshold of old age. Miss Royde-Smith writes extremely well with humor, charm and delicate perception.

ESTHER FORBES

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THE FIFTH SON OF THE SHOEMAKER *by Donald Corley* (MCBRIDE. $2.00)

WITH the title in mind and going upon the author's own jacket design, one takes up this book with the expectation that it will be a children's book. And indeed it is—but for children over twenty-one. The story of the expansion of an East Side cobbler's shop into a chain of shoe stores was hardly intended for boys and girls; on the other hand, the story of the shoemaking talents of the Russian cobbler Ivan and the musical talents of his fifth son Pyotr could certainly not have been expected to appeal to mature men and women. It is a misplaced fairy tale, more improbable than Hans Christian Andersen, more sentimental than Sterne, more gushing than a saleslady. It is gilded with a thousand ornaments—a great many of them suggestive of James Branch Cabell. And the cobbler, of course, is a saint, and the composer a genius.

No one will enjoy finding fault with Mr. Corley, however; he is too tender about the entire world. He may violate every existing canon of taste, and in this book he does. But in the end we are obliged to forgive him, for every word that he writes comes unmistakably from his heart, and it is evident to anyone that his heart is in the right place.

KEITH OF KINNELLAN *by Agnes Muir Mackenzie* (R. R. SMITH. $2.00)

SITTING in her Bloomsbury flat, Miss Mackenzie has written a novel of her native Scottish coast. As is fitting when a birthplace—alas! now changed by industrialism and the decline of the West—falls into the hands of an author of taste and cultivation, she has written with the zeal of an antiquary and with nostalgia. It is the latter which does most to impart charm to her novel. The story is that of Gilbert Keith, who becomes the laird of Kinnellan upon the death of his father. While his wife Bertha is away for the night he cannot refrain from seducing his cousin and ward, Anne Ogilvie. Later, half by accident, half in earnest, he shoves Bertha over one of the dangerous coastal cliffs. He is almost brought to trial for her murder, but the case is not pushed against him by the authorities. Anne, who is a Catholic, goes to a convent. It then develops that she is pregnant. Through the mediation of a wise Catholic priest Gilbert is led to follow and marry her. At first he thinks of selling Kinnellan and going to America. Later, however, he decides to return to Kinnellan with Anne, and in the end they settle down in the ancient home, faced by a certain amount of neighborly disapproval, it is true, but on the whole happy.

It is evident that Miss Mackenzie has made a romance of a story whose only significance could have been a moral one, and that she has most cold-bloodedly sacrificed poor Bertha to an unprincipled nepotism. And yet one reads her novel with a certain degree of pleasure, particularly those scenes which are laid in interiors. For in Miss Mackenzie's Scotland, no matter how cheerless it is without, there is always a glow within. The reader enjoys warming his hands at the fire of this Bloomsbury Scot's nostalgia.

GERALD SYKES

SOLDIERS MARCH *by Theodore Fredenburgh* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $2.00)

IN THIS work the author attempts to give us a picture of war without a viewpoint. The effect of Mr. Fredenburgh's book is that of a sincere condemnation of war, but it is a condemnation almost wholly devoid of social content, of any feeling of a socially motivated resentment or rebellion. What protest it contains is purely physical and personal, the protest of a naturally healthy and vigorous being against the threat of extinction or pain. The author fails to indicate just what it was that helped some of the men to overcome their animal fear, that gave them the strength

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and perseverance to "go through with it". Zorn, the hero, is repeatedly made to say that actual war is quite different from ideal war, but merely to assert that there is a contradiction between glory and the reality of attaining it is to add nothing to our understanding of war. It is the business of the competent artist to transfer both glory and suffering, that is to say the ideal and the experience, to a third plane where either can be appraised in terms of the other. Mr. Fredenburgh has not done so.

With Zorn war becomes simply a problem of adaptation. Realizing that he is caught in the meshes of a "system" whose rules, working from top to bottom, cannot be set aside, he decides that the best way to beat the "system" is to get as far from the bottom as possible. And so he throws himself into the task of earning and holding a position of command over a group of men, making them "soldier" in the most efficient, that is, the most heartless, manner approved by his superiors. What we get therefore is really a picture of army life in war-time, with trench fighting, artillery battles and gas attacks as mere incidentals. Nevertheless, within the limitations noted, *Soldiers March* is a forceful and sincere work displaying its author's undoubted gift of description and honesty of perception.

LOUIS RICH

MY OWN FAR TOWERS *by Mathilde Eiker* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.00)

THE sacrifice of a daughter's ambition for her parents' need has been the subject of books before this, and will be again, but Miss Eiker, who has never yet been accused of triteness, has brought an element of originality and practicality into her story that lifts it above mere ordinary pathos. In telling the story of Lucy Vale's life, she has told the story of a woman who wanted to be an artist but was thwarted by circumstance from ever doing anything but support relatives. Each time Lucy has an opportunity to go to Paris to study, some ill fortune intervenes; the illness of her father, her brother's rascality, her mother's illness and finally the necessity for caring for her brother's child. But the reader, with Lucy, knows that genius is not burning, and that if Lucy had had her chance, she would probably have made nothing of it. This, then, becomes the tragedy. The author has once more proved herself a writer not only of ability but of integrity and deep insight.

MYRA M. WATERMAN

NOTHING TO PAY *by Caradoc Evans* (NORTON. $2.50)

THIS novel is written in English with a Welsh meaning, it has something of Hogarth's form and something of Dekker's energy, it begins among the peasants in Cardigan and ends in Soho, and it tells the sordid pilgrimage of a Welsh apprentice in the drapery trade. It is very difficult and exciting and unpleasant to read. Mr. Evans is a writer who is certain to be better known than he is today; he is, I think, a distinguished writer, if one can say that of a novelist who creates in his own image, which is the only way to create, but thereafter cannot separate himself from his creatures, so that everything in his story is exactly measured to their stature and bound up within their strange intelligence. His Welshmen live inward and not outward, they speak among themselves and not out of themselves. Like fish in a glass tank, they live a clear and deliberate and grotesque life; but it has no meaning to us; it can neither be touched nor heard. But whatever its deficiencies as a novel, this is an extraordinary piece of literature. Perhaps one can only give an impression of it by enumerating those things which seem to enclose and imprison its vivid and unintelligible life—the meanness, the dirt, the lust, the music, and the spare and terrible imagination of peasant Welshmen.

GEORGE DANGERFIELD

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# BIOGRAPHY

HENRY JAMES: LETTERS TO A. C. BENSON AND AUGUSTE MONOD *edited with an introduction by E. F. Benson* (SCRIBNER'S. $5.00)

THIS well-printed—though oddly and inappropriately bound—volume probably closes the account between James and the Benson family. It was formally opened on "a hot Sunday in the July of 1884", at Cambridge, when A. C. Benson, who had just taken his degree and was still lingering at the University, went to luncheon at the house of Frederic Myers—and met there two guests, each of whom became a faithful, lifelong friend. One of these was "a small, pale, noticeable man, with a short, pointed beard, and with large, piercingly observant eyes. He was elegantly dressed in a light gray suit, with a frock-coat of the same material, and in the open air he wore a white tall hat". Already, indeed, Benson knew some of James's books well; his father—by this time Archbishop of Canterbury—had recently quoted *Roderick Hudson* in a University sermon; and the author of that novel was one of the young graduate's "chief literary heroes". He was inevitably, now, transported with delight at meeting him, at taking him to the service, after luncheon, in the chapel of King's College, and then to tea in his own rooms at King's.

It was a day, surely, deserving the tribute of fond recollection that Benson paid it in his *Memories and Friends*, in the chapter which he there devoted to James. And in that chapter he speaks of having "a large bundle" of his friend's letters. We now know what the bundle contained. Six pieces from it were printed in 1920 by Mr. Percy Lubbock in *The Letters of Henry James*. The present volume contains fifty more letters to Benson, and a telegram. After the publication of Mr. Lubbock's volumes, complaint was made by some who owned portions of James's correspondence, concerning the letters which that editor had withheld. One cannot know, certainly, what treasures of friendly intercourse, doubtless very numerous, may still lie hidden. Time will show; for beyond question other letters will be published. But meanwhile the first effect of this collection—like that of two other small collections privately printed in 1916 and 1923—is triumphantly to vindicate Mr. Lubbock's taste and judgment. He took from the bundle the six letters which were quite the best for his purpose, and which were also, in themselves, "among the most interesting"—as Mr. E. F. Benson candidly admits in his pleasantly written introduction, in which he sounds the right, true note, though, alas, not without a trace of affectation at the end.

This is not, however, to say that the volume under review is empty of value. On the contrary, it has a special value of its own, which will be gratefully acknowledged by all to whom James is one of the significant figures of the last half-century. For it gives us the complete written record—save for a few notes which, we are told, "deal with mere trivialities"—of one of James's friendships; and this is something that Mr. Lubbock, with his different task and responsibilities, could not do. Yet it was worth doing, because it has an excellent illustrative use. Mr. E. F. Benson very well says: "No one valued and needed friendship more than James, and few can have had a larger company of those with whom he established and



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maintained a special relation. Long intervals often elapsed during which he neither saw nor wrote to them, but, when once the relationship was established, the silver cord was never loosed, and he took hold on it again in all its brightness, and demanded to know all that had happened to the absent and how and when and why. He loved to be cherished in similar fashion and to be held in remembrance, speaking of himself as 'singularly accessible to demonstrations of regard' and thanking heaven that 'for him remembrance was a great romance'. Nothing clouded the clear shining of these relationships: he could be and invariably was critical of his friends, but he wholly rejoiced in their successes and achievements, humourously picturing himself as 'gilded by their effulgence' as he watched their enviable progresses".

Something of all this has been generally known—and it raises an embarrassing question for those who like to insist that James timidly shrank from the real world—but now it is possible to see at full length what this "special relation", not among the most intimate of James's, a "representative" one rather, actually was. And the spectacle is one of beauty—of a beauty scarcely to be realized, however, save from the combined impression made by the whole correspondence, which extends itself over the years from September, 1892, to May, 1915. And so far as it yields to specification, Mr. E. F. Benson has sympathetically pictured—in the passage from his introduction which I have just quoted—the quality of James's devotion to his friends.

For the rest, these letters tell little which cannot be learned from Mr. Lubbock's volumes, though they interestingly supplement that more important collection at various points. For example, in one of the letters printed by Mr. Lubbock, James speaks of a time (May, 1895) when he was acting as a friendly guide to Alphonse Daudet, then staying in London. He had taken Daudet to Windsor and to Eton, where Benson was a master, without notifying the latter of his coming—and had, as a consequence, failed to see him. This provoked a protest, to which James answered: "Strike, but hear me. . . . I weighed the question of notifying you in advance—weighed it anxiously; but the scale against it was pressed down by overwhelming considerations. Daudet is so unwell and fatigable and unable to walk or to mount steps or stairs (he could do Windsor Castle only from the carriage), that I didn't know he would pull through the excursion at all—and I thought it unfair to inflict on you the awkward problem of his getting, or not getting, into your house—of his getting over to Eton at all—and of the five other members of his family being hurled upon you. . . . Still, I had a sneaking romantic *hope* of you. I should have liked them, hungry for the great show, to behold you! As I turned sadly from your 'adorable cottage' and got back into the carriage A. D. said to me—having waited contemplatively during my conference with your domestic: 'Ah, si vous saviez comme ces petits coins d'Angleterre m'amusent!' A. C. B. would have amused him still more. Content yourself, for the hour, my dear Arthur Benson, with 'amusing' a humbler master of *Dichtung*—and an equal one, perhaps, of *Wahrheit*". This explanation led to further correspondence, and an invitation (as we now learn from the new letters under review), in accepting which James added: "Thanks indeed for the little story of the Eton-boy and the Daudet book: it will charm the sensitive Alphonse. I wish he might have done Eton properly—but (though I take them all, woe's the day—7 persons!—to Oxford on Saturday) he is unable to do anything properly. He is not like your Papa and Mamma; whose visit, moreover, is the only thing, I think, I ever envied the Queen. Don't be presented—be like me: be a Rock. Let the Queen be dying to have you—and not have the time. Your '9 maids' sound like the Grand Turk—save for their maidenhood! Will they all wait on me?"

A few other sallies of this kind not only

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supplement Mr. Lubbock's representation but, indeed, serviceably correct it in small ways. And, in addition, the present volume contains an interesting series of fourteen letters to M. Auguste Monod, extending from 1905 to 1913, from which can be learned James's fortune, as he saw it, at the hands of a capable and sympathetic man of letters who turned some of his shorter pieces into French. In a word, he had finally to confess, "the sense of the translator's fumble (fumble even at the very best and finest)" was always for him "a thing of irritation and anguish". Hence he positively rejoiced in 1913 when M. Monod discovered that *A Small Boy and Others* "utterly defied translation". And yet, probably still in 1913—and certainly at an earlier time—James would have been pleased much more, and more truly, had M. Monod succeeded happily in his task.

Mr. E. F. Benson, in his introduction to the Monod letters, says that he was unable to ascertain how many of the projected translations "were actually carried through". Apparently only two of them were published—"Paste" (*Perle Fausse, Revue Bleue,* 18 January, 1908) and "The Siege of London" (*La Conquête de Londres, Mercure de France,* 16 November and 1 December, 1912)—though the translation of at least two others, "A London Life" and "The Given Case", was completed.

ROBERT SHAFER

## THE FRIEND OF SHELLEY *by H. J. Massingham* (APPLETON. $3.50)

THE first thing the name of Trelawny recalls is probably, for most people, Mary Shelley's picture of "A kind of half-Arab Englishman whose life has been as changeful as that of Anastasius, and who recounts the adventures of his youth as eloquently and well as the imagined Greek". It is an arresting description, but it does not make out that the subject possessed any deep ulterior significance. That is doubtless why Mr. Massingham calls it "patronising". For with an enviable if partly mistaken enthusiasm, he insists on investing the hero of his biography with the deepest significance.

This Trelawny did not possess. The story of his early life as told by himself in his *Adventures of a Younger Son* reveals, it is undeniable, a decided originality of outlook, and a singularity of deportment. Trelawny's originality has not, however, any important meaning for posterity. Mr. Massingham emphasizes the fact that he was like one of Byron's corsairs, but would willingly forget that it was Byron himself and not any of his corsairs who is really significant of the age in which he lived. And, unusual as Trelawny's *Adventures* were, they fail to hold the attention as his *Recollections of the Last Days of Byron and Shelley* do. If Trelawny is to have real interest for us, except as a "character" who was more or less "sympathetic", he must borrow it somewhere.

Although he does not say so and in fact implies the contrary, Mr. Massingham evidently feels this himself. He writes of Trelawny as "The Friend of Shelley", and invests him with an aura "by right of discipleship". As a corollary he tends to depreciate unduly almost all the rest of those who were closest to Shelley. Only the comparatively harmless Edward and Jane Williams escape his censure.

The cumulative effect is unfortunate. It is difficult to like Mary Shelley very much and still more difficult to admire her extravagantly. A thousand circumstances show her essential mediocrity. But if not of Shelley's stature, she was in advance of most the women of her age, wrote books that were sufficiently celebrated and through the title of one of them she has added a word to the English language. She certainly amounted to more than Trelawny, and nothing is to be gained by seizing every occasion to try to enforce the opposite.

With Lord Byron, he does not go so far; but contents himself with focusing his at-

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tention on some of Byron's less amiable traits. Leigh Hunt, however, fares perhaps the worst of all. Mr. Massingham gives to everything Hunt does or says the most unfortunate twist possible. Yet surely he cannot he ignorant of Shelley's deep-seated affection and unshakable esteem for Leigh Hunt, repeatedly expressed in word and deed. "One more gentle, honourable, innocent and brave; one of more exalted toleration for all who do and think evil, and yet himself more free from evil; one who knows better how to receive, and how to confer a benefit, though he must ever confer far more than he can receive; one of simpler, and, in the highest sense of the word, of purer life and manners I never knew."

That this should carry no weight with Mr. Massingham is, at first sight, very strange indeed. For if he perceives any fault at all in Shelley, he does not say what it is. He speaks of the "staggering ineptitude" of Matthew Arnold's essay on Shelley. "Arnold's *mot* about the ineffectual angel is one of the crassest as it is one of the most Philistine judgments in all literary criticism." Arnold's essay is certainly one of the most regrettable ever penned by a major critic. But in one of his letters—to Lady de Rothschild if I remember rightly—he disarmingly explains, "Professor Dowden was too much for me". Mr. Massingham leaves an impression of surpassing even Professor Dowden in his adulation of Shelley. His tone of worship, insistently sustained, becomes very trying, and all the more in what purports to be a biography of someone else.

The most notable instance of unfairness is the statement, found on page 221, that Hunt "did not think Shelley's poetry good enough for the *Examiner*". This is a point on which one would not have thought it possible to go so far astray. The first public reference of approval to Shelley's work, as Mr. Brimley Johnson remarks, and as is well known, was made by Leigh Hunt and in the *Examiner* for December 1st, 1816 (No. 466) in a mention of "Alastor". A few weeks later, in the *Examiner* No. 473, Hunt published the entire *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, with a short prefatory paragraph commending it. No. 518 contained a long extract from *Laon and Cynthia* in advance of the publication of the whole work; and another extract from this poem, now called by its final title, *The Revolt of Islam*, appeared in the *Examiner* No. 526. In No. 527 Hunt began, with the words, "This is an extraordinary production", an extensive and appreciative criticism of the completed poem, with copious extracts; and continued it in Nos. 530 and 531. Nos. 613, 614 and 615 contained a spirited defence of the same work and of its author against the violent attacks of the *Quarterly Review*, which, says Hunt, "ought to be ashamed of the (article) it has written upon Mr. Shelley". In No. 593 there is a review of *Rosalind and Helen* in which Hunt declares that "Mr. Shelley has eminently succeeded in all that he thus wished to do"; and a laudatory reference to the "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills". In Nos. 750 and 751 Hunt published an appreciation of *Prometheus Unbound*, and in No. 752 he printed in the course of an article on Shelley the entire ode "To a Skylark", with the comment: "I know of nothing more beautiful than this,—more choice of tones, more natural in words, more abundant in exquisite, cordial, and most poetical associations". In the *Examiner* No. 754, he gave a long notice of "Adonais". Mr. Brimley Johnson remarks with truth: "The complete series thus forms a body of contemporary criticism, the only comprehensive estimate of his genius that appeared during his life: a courageous tribute of Friendship, that honours alike the poet and his judge".

It is a pity that Mr. Massingham's book is not a little better balanced, a trifle more restrained. In spite of lapses, some due apparently to ignorance and others to his extreme partiality for his subject, his book is in many respects scholarly, in some inspiring. But

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there was no need to belittle Shelley's other friends to make Trelawny more interesting; and more telling than the reiterated and emotional description of the blank in Trelawny's life which the loss of Shelley caused, are Trelawny's own words written to Leigh Hunt, which Mr. Massingham does not quote.

JAMES ORRICK

WOLSEY *by Hilaire Belloc* (LIPPINCOTT. $5.00)

IF ASKED to name say the half dozen chief living masters of the pen, few competent critics would fail to include Belloc.

The mere quantity of his work bespeaks an amazing energy: in just over thirty years he has published no less than ninety-three books. Talk about Raphael's century of sonnets! Half his number of volumes would long since have killed most writers. Then there is the variety of his work: he ranges from nonsense-rhyme to high verse, from political economy to the fantastic essay, from history to farce-novels, from biography to travel, from warfare to religion. Still more astonishing is the high quality of his immense and varied production. In his vast heap of books—printers' errors apart—it would be hard to find half-a-dozen bad sentences; always he is both lucid and graceful. Nowhere is his thought negligible. His worst enemy can accuse him neither of dulness nor insincerity.

It should also be remembered that this man with his French name, his Gallic lucidity, and his typically British physique—stocky, powerful body, broad face and keen blue eyes, altogether not unlike the John Bull of the kindly old drawings—has stamped himself so deeply upon our letters despite the handicap of his perpetual and belligerent championship of Roman Catholicism, a minority religion in every English-speaking country but Ireland. Especially his historical work has been attacked on the score of religious partisanship. As to this general charge the space here compels the reviewer to content himself with a general judgment, which is this: that Belloc has destroyed great masses of the anti-Romish case built up by the so-called Whig historians. Like many other men of considerable intellectual power he is oddly inaccurate in details; he is perpetually writing south when he means north and Smith when he means Jones. But when the specialists of tomorrow begin to pick the bones of these Whig historians—as they will surely do—they will find his arrows deeply driven into each carcass.

In this book he gives us an historical biography of Thomas Wolsey, Archbishop of York, for many years Papal Legate in England and chief minister—almost sole minister—to Henry VIII.

His style, like that of many prolific writers (for instance Ruskin, a man of far less intellectual calibre), has become simpler with time. He no longer gives us the sustained organ-roll of prose of his *Marie Antoinette* of more than twenty years ago. His manner is still elevated and firm. He writes of Wolsey that ". . . he missed one small abnormal factor, the secret control possessed over an abnormal character, the king's, by an abnormal woman, who came to possess Henry's soul; and that detail, like the snare hidden in grass over which a giant stumbles, brought him down full length in one crash after so many years of uncontrolled dominion". But in general his writing is addressed less to the ear and more directly to the mind.

Parallel with this increasing simplicity of style is a concentration upon character. Thus the three published volumes of his *History of England* are vivid galleries of individual portraits reminiscent of Holbein. So too the vignettes of the characters in this book brilliantly stand out.

Two final words as to the so-called Reformation: regarding the corruption of the sixteenth-century Papacy, especially the wretched shuffling of Pope Clement VII, Belloc is ad-

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mirably severe. Of that wretched man he truly says that his ". . . attitude . . . was weak and tortuous in such a degree that history has never forgiven him". As to the particular Indulgence that set Luther off he is equally candid. Whether the system which in its day of power produced such evils might have been improved upon he does not ask. When Roman Catholics of his calibre begin to ask themselves that question the reunion of Christendom will be nearer. Meanwhile the contemporary Roman Church, with its extreme centralization and rigid authority, can at least point to the confusion so nearly universal outside its borders.

Belloc's second point regarding the Reformation is that its time resembled the present in that it was big with change of a sort whose nature no living man could then foresee. If indeed that is so, then at least the sixteenth-century parallel persuades us that our coming changes may be very different from those anyone now expects.

HOFFMAN NICKERSON

RETROSPECT *by Lord Balfour* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $3.50)

WHETHER as autobiography or as a contribution to political history this book is remarkably thin. To all serious intents and purposes it stops at the year 1886, before the time of Balfour's political eminence, before the time when his reminiscences would have been most likely to interest us. It is somewhat vaguely inhabited with the gigantic figures of Gladstone, Salisbury, Beaconsfield, documented with rather lifeless letters and mechanical conversations. The only time that Balfour's prose throws off its lethargy is in the account of the famous Fourth Party, and of that astounding and brilliant figure, Lord Randolph Churchill. Lord Balfour died before he could complete this book, and his hand—once upon a time, be it remembered, a very cunning hand—had lost the better part of its cunning when he wrote it, so that his words at best can only communicate the fragments of a charming personality.

And yet, having read the book, one is surprised into the reflection that it has been not only readable but fascinating. Examine it once again, chapter by chapter. You will find remotely surviving in its author's tired and faltering prose the very accent and intonation of cultured Victorian talk, the sort of talk that contemporary volumes of *Punch* and a few—very few, and those not the best known—of the contemporary novels have kept alive for us. In the sense that *Retrospect* talks to us, it is not an experience to be missed.

GEORGE DANGERFIELD

EDUCATION OF A PRINCESS: A MEMOIR *by Marie, Grand Duchess of Russia* (VIKING. $5.00)

UNDER the slightly ironic title, *Education of a Princess*, the Grand Duchess Marie of Russia has set down a record of her life. Marie was one of the last surviving Romanoffs, a grand-daughter of Tsar Alexander II, a first cousin to the ill-fated Tsar Nicholas, and sister to the Grand Duke Dmitri who was exiled for his implication, with Prince Yusupoff, in the death of Rasputin. As one might expect, her recollections are politically uninteresting and unimportant. In spite of the obvious growth of revolutionary sentiment in Russia, the Romanoff family never seriously considered relinquishing a jot of its despotic power, and spent the last years of the reign in blind and unsuspecting comfort. Even when the revolution broke, Marie, at the center of the terrible whirlpool, understood comparatively little of the events which had set it in motion.

As a personal record, however, the memoir is illuminating. Although the Russian court was rather less formal than the courts of Europe, the life of a Russian royal princess was spent in a veritable vacuum. Marie's formal education, received at the hands of stupid governesses with irreproachable family con-

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nections, was incredibly narrow and false. She had little in the way of family ties—since her mother was dead and her father banished for an unsanctioned remarriage—nothing in the way of disinterested friendships or intellectual interests and pursuits. Dull and tedious as the chapters are which precede her marriage to Prince William of Sweden, they can hardly be a tenth as dull as the existence they chronicle.

After the annulment of her marriage, Marie returned to Russia, went to the front as a nurse during the war, and organized and directed her own hospital. The really stirring chapters of the book are those which describe her second marriage, this time from inclination, to Prince Putiatin, the assassination of Rasputin, the imprisonment and death of her aunt, and the final escape through the Bolshevist lines to Roumania. The events of the book, since they amply warrant it, might have been related in much more dramatic form. But what the narrative loses in force it gains in obvious authenticity, in reticence, and in an engaging appearance of honesty.

MARGARET WALLACE

FRANCIS DANA *by W. P. Cresson* (DIAL PRESS. $5.00)

THE author of *Diplomatic Portraits* has here written a fascinating volume which might be called a history of the American Revolution and Revolutionary diplomacy in so far as Francis Dana was involved. Thus the military aspects of the war are scarcely touched upon except for a brilliant chapter on Valley Forge, and this was included only because Dana was the leading member of the congressional committee which, on account of the Conway Cabal, was sent there to interview the Commander-in-Chief. As a result Dana became a profound admirer of Washington.

The real story begins in 1879 with the mission of John Adams—Dana acting as secretary and alternate—to France as "Minister Plenipotentiary appointed to negotiate a Treaty of Peace and Commerce with Great Britain"—a peace not to be realized for nearly four years. This is not a history for the hasty reader. The author refrains from dramatization of his facts, but he has marshalled his material in masterly fashion.

Dr. Cresson has drawn largely on Dana papers still in manuscript and on other original material (some of which has never before been used). The activities of Franklin in Paris are slighted in favor of the adventures of Adams and Dana. Adams, of course, neither liked nor trusted Franklin. Nor was his own method of breaking through the diplomatic meshes "like a whale goes thro' a net", in his own words, entirely agreeable to the greater diplomat. The French loved Franklin; they disliked Adams, who thoroughly disliked and mistrusted them. Dana, so closely bound to Adams, both politically and in friendship, was inclined to his side, but he maintained the judicial mind throughout.

Then Dana went on his forlorn mission to Russia, a Puritan Don Quixote sent to tackle the most corrupt and licentious court in Europe, the court of that fascinating, extraordinary woman, Catherine the Great. He went—to cap the absurdity—accompanied only by his friend's son, John Quincy Adams, then a boy of fourteen, as his secretary, interpreter of French, and ward.

It seems doubtful if anyone but a Franklin could have accomplished much at St. Petersburg in opposition to the charming Sir James Harris (Lord Malmsbury), backed by British gold. That an upright colonial lawyer should have failed even of a hearing in two years was to be expected. Meanwhile the courtiers of the great Queen and Empress enjoyed the spectacle of this faithful servant of impoverished and revolutionary colonies biting his nails. May no government have worse servants than Francis Dana—and, one may add, than the boy interpreter-secretary extraordinary, John Quincy Adams. The latter was

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to get his revenge. Years later as Ambassador to Russia under Madison he was able to wave aside a most pressing suggestion for a Russo-American trade alliance as contrary to the American theory. Indeed, one of the important contributions of this book is the illuminating light it throws on the background for the American policy of "no entangling alliances" and on the attitude of the fathers which was later to find expression in the Monroe Doctrine.

Back home, Dana re-entered Congress. His stay there was short. He became a celebrated Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, a staunch upholder of the common law and the Federal Union. He died during the excitement that immediately preceded the War of 1812. Not the least memorable of the many letters printed in this book is the fiery one written by that remarkable woman, Abigail Adams, about the death of a dear friend. It is a fitting tribute to the memory of an eighteenth-century patriot. There were giants in public life in those days. And though Francis Dana may not be reckoned among the most brilliant, powerful, or original, he achieved and maintained the respect and honor of them all.

FRED T. MARSH

## HIGH STAKES AND HAIR TRIGGER: THE LIFE OF JEFFERSON DAVIS *by Robert W. Winston* (HOLT. $3.50)

ENCOURAGED perhaps by the success of his *Life of Andrew Johnson*, Judge Winston has endeavored to depict the career of the Confederate president. With much good material at hand the result is still disappointing. The author does well, indeed, in the early chapters but later falls into a maze of contradictions and errors. The reader learns with interest that "Jeff" was not a true Southern aristocrat, though he comported himself as one, being, instead, of the second generation from a Welsh immigrant. Davis, father of Jefferson, was a wandering squatter, who however gave stamina and purpose to his eldest son Joseph, twenty-four years older than his ambitious brother, to whom he played the part of a parent, pushing him through West Point and establishing him on a homestead after he left the army.

It is evident that Jefferson Davis was shaped by climate and environment into the fire-eater he became. Mississippi had the same effect upon him that it had on J. A. Quitman, the New Yorker, and on Sargent S. Prentiss, the word-thrower from Portland, Maine. Beyond the picture of primitive days the book is ordinary, and much besprinkled with preventable errors. The author begins the series of these with an artless anachronism, having "Booth and Barrett" give nine performances at Natchez, in the mid-forties. Before this he makes the second lieutenant capture Black Hawk, the rebellious warrior of the Sacs and Foxes. He has William Walker, the filibuster, operating against Cuba, instead of Nicaragua. William Lloyd Garrison's fervid declaration against slavery is credited to "Lovejoy". General Roger A. Pryor, certainly was never "Prior" during his long career as lawyer and Supreme Court Justice in New York. The *Merrimac* was plated with railroad rails, not "sheet iron". But enough! It would have been expected that with the facilities at hand Judge Winston would have given a statesmanlike story of Davis's doings while presiding over the Confederacy at Richmond, but he slights this almost entirely, beyond editorializing on mistakes in foreign policy and Davis's failure to make himself a dictator.

The impression which the book will leave with the present generation is one of pity that the South could bow to such leadership. To quote: "In a word Jefferson Davis was a paradox. A neurasthenic and a semi-invalid; one eye gone, he was nevertheless a fighter; a nationalist, he was the champion of States' rights; the apostle of liberty, he advocated slavery; a Democrat, he aspired to aristocracy; professing great love for the Union, he

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was about to pursue a course to destroy it. . . . He had deceived himself into believing that the clock had been turned back, that slavery could exist in the heart of America in the middle of the nineteenth century, and that the Union and slavery could march hand in hand".

JOHN CHARLES FRÉMONT *by Cardinal Goodwin* (STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS. $4.00)

THIS is a coldly critical account of the career of the Pathfinder to whom we owe California and much besides. Most romantic of American adventurers, his was an unfortunate story. Often within sight of a high place in history, something always spoiled him. He was recognized politically by becoming the first presidential candidate of the Republican party, and in his declining years was supported, after much misfortune, by being made Territorial Governor of Arizona. His delinquencies would appear to have been more the results of imagination than of mischief, but his latest biographer shows him no mercy. His term of office as Military Commander of the Department of the Missouri was darkened by graft and assumptions of authority that would have brought him severe punishment at the hands of a less magnanimous man than Abraham Lincoln, while his usurpations of power were amazing. His successes were for others; his failures were his own. His temperament was too enterprising for his capacities. This the author clearly shows, and would have it that he was a vagabond by instinct, accounted for by the wanderings of his parents in pre-natal and later days.

It is a painful picture, the result of studies which one somehow wishes had not been undertaken. The great results that have followed in the man's footsteps have earned for his memory a large measure of fame and forgiveness.

DON C. SEITZ

THE LONGER DAY *by the author of Miss Tiverton Goes Out* (BOBBS-MERRILL. $2.50)

A DETAILED and intimate study of the life of a strange woman who once ran away from a picnic at which Tennyson, Ruskin, Huxley, Darwin, Browning and other literary notables were guests, because she was not particularly interested in what was being said or done. Brenda Holt's sister and father, and after them, her husband and children, were all a part of the innermost circle of the brilliant literary set of the late Victorian era, but Brenda, in spite of the vast opportunities offered her, made no attempt to profit by contact with the "great minds" of her day. This woman, who apparently had no interests other than her fanatical devotion to her gibbering idiot child, Brownie, finds for herself, and for the few who understand her, a richness and meaning to life which was never known by these clever, restless, experimenting, eternally seeking and questioning people who pitied her her narrow existence. A well-written story, occasionally sentimental.

FRANCES T. GREEN

VOLTAIRE *by Georg Brandes* (BONI. TWO VOLS. $10.00)

THIS much-heralded work from the critic of Goethe, Heine, Shakespeare, and Michelangelo, for the translation of which we have been waiting since 1917, is a disappointment. And that despite the most naïve and deeply rooted predisposition to receive it enthusiastically, for Georg Brandes enjoys an undisputed and international reputation as a critic and biographer. Moreover, we have been told that when he sat down to write his *Voltaire*, after having lived and fought for his ideals through three-quarters of a stormy century, he was himself a sort of "patriarch of Ferney" and arbiter of literary fashion. That his own life offered a perfect preparation for a sympathetic understanding of his subject there

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can be no doubt; but whatever advantages Brandes may have started with, the fact remains that a professor and literary historian, Gustave Lanson, in one quarter of the space Brandes uses, had already written a life of Voltaire which surpasses his in every respect. And in English, despite the efforts of the present translators, the definitive biography will probably continue to be the already fifty-year-old work of Viscount Morley.

The greatest fault of *Voltaire* is that it lacks a general plan: exercising no selection at all, the author has tried to squeeze together all his notes. From the maze of irrelevant digressions, ill-organized quotations, and long accounts of minor incidents having no bearing upon the subject, the astounding personality of Voltaire emerges as if in spite of Georg Brandes. But the genius of the man has withstood even more severe tests in the past, since it has survived the withering dryness of innumerable doctoral theses, the overwhelming if invaluable notes of the *Société des Textes français modernes*, and the mutilations of generations of anthologists. Brandes knows the eighteenth century well enough (though for those who do not he might have added a few more dates) to recognize that no apology is needed for either the actions or the writings of the man who epitomizes the spirit of that century. Even his shameful lawsuits with the Président de Brosses and the German merchant, or the contradictons involved in the attempt to send his enemies to the Bastille, and the frequent ridicule of their lowly origin by the self-ennobled champion of liberty become quite comprehensible when one is familiar with Voltaire's character and that of his age. Such actions startle us now no more than those conscious contradictions: the dedication of *Œdipus* to the incestuous Regent and of *Mahomet* to the Pope. Without endeavoring to excuse Voltaire, then, Brandes presents the good and the bad in his nature; in dealing with Voltaire's enemies, however, the biographer shows less indulgence than he himself did: the chapter on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for instance, is shockingly partial.

Where Brandes excels, on the other hand, is in the portraits of Voltaire's contemporaries and the wealth of anecdotes, drawn from private correspondence and memoirs, with which he has filled in his background of French, German, and English society. The Duc de Richelieu, the Marquise du Châtelet, Madame de Tencin, Frederick II, and Julie de Lespinasse appear as living human beings and at times cause one to forget that the author is not writing an intellectual and social history of the century. Voltaire is sometimes left at his amateur theatre in Ferney while we are swept off to follow the astounding career of Madame de Pompadour or for a glimpse of Catherine II's court. Indeed, it is for just these lifelike sketches of Voltaire's friends together with the often concise—more often frightfully prolix—anecdotes, full of humor and horror, that the book will be read.

In contrast to Lanson, Georg Brandes brings nothing new to the criticism or interpretation of Voltaire; anyone really interested in the subject would do better by reading a short biography and then tackling Voltaire himself. Though his own enthusiasm for François Marie Arouet is apparent on every page, it is doubtful whether this study would be capable of exciting an interest in anyone, if such a person were conceivable, who knew nothing about Voltaire. When Brandes neither records nor criticizes but merely "writes", the result is pother. In short, Georg Brandes's *Voltaire* falls somewhere between a good, concise biography and an eight-volume work on Voltaire and eighteenth-century society—like that of Desnoiresterres, for example—and as such it probably has its use.

JUSTIN O'BRIEN

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# ESSAYS AND CRITICISM

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE *by E. K. Chambers* (OXFORD. TWO VOLS. $15.00)

THIS prodigious work, which fills nearly a thousand pages and whose appearance is at first terrifyingly "professional", represents only a small fraction of the published work of a scholar who has devoted his life to the study of the English theatre during the medieval and Elizabethan periods. As its subtitle, "A Study of Facts and Problems", would suggest, it leaves no question undiscussed; consequently it will probably immediately establish itself and long remain the definitive treatment of Shakespeare's life and work.

But despite the excellent photographs and facsimiles with which it is illustrated, this book can have very little popular appeal, since Mr. Chambers has organized his material in such a way as to constitute a work of reference; as such it is invaluable and no Shakespeare library will be without it. Each chapter is headed with an exhaustive bibliography; chronological tables, metrical tables, and a table of quartos are added whenever necessary; the subject index itself is divided into three parts: plays, persons, and general. In short, everything has been done to aid the student and all such devices as might possibly confuse him have been omitted.

Beginning with what is known of the life of the dramatist and discussing at the same time the state of the stage in 1592 when Shakespeare makes his first appearance upon it, Mr. Chambers passes from the acting-companies to the publishers, and treats the manner in which manuscripts and play-books were handled in the theatre and in the printing-house. This leads naturally to the questions of contradictory versions, lost plays, mutilated texts and finally to the related problems of authenticity and chronology. In every discussion he takes account of the divergent opinions of various scholars. Thus by gathering together all the evidence on a given subject and all the conclusions that might be drawn from such evidence, each chapter constitutes a convenient index to all previous studies on that subject. Finally, the remainder of the first volume takes up individually and in the oldest form that it has come down to us each work attributed to Shakespeare: the plays of the first folio, those outside the first folio, and the poems and sonnets. The second volume considers all the non-literary records, whether genuine or spurious.

In general Mr. Chambers's conclusions are cautious and tend therefore to be just; his method is primarily that of the historian, and perhaps no other man is more familiar with the Elizabethan stage. Wherever possible, he inclines to give Shakespeare the credit and to consider him as above all a conscious artist. For instance he calls most of the plays Shakespeare's and wholly his: whereas he got ideas from every source, he probably did not dress up other men's plays or often rewrite his own. Mr. Chambers traces, moreover, a gradual development of a series of styles; and he finds the identification of Essex with Shakespeare's characters and the discovery of other portraits of and attacks upon contemporaries quite groundless. On the other hand, in default of sufficient evidence, it is impossible to state anything definite as to Shakespeare's early employment, his reasons for leaving Stratford, or his Italian travels; likewise the questions of how much and how well he himself acted or



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whether or not he was a Catholic must also remain unanswered. In his treatment of the mechanics of the theatre, playwriting, censorship, organization of the companies, play-producing, the relation of actors to publishers, et cetera, Mr. Chambers is unequalled. And if anyone has a desire, as he is almost certain to have, to go deeper into this subject, he has only to turn back to the same author's more comprehensive work on *The Elizabethan Stage* which appeared in 1923, and whose design is completed by the present volumes.

MARCEL PROUST; SA RÉVÉLATION PSYCHOLOGIQUE *by Arnaud Dandieu* (OXFORD. $1.50)

THE scientific language in which M. Dandieu veils his thought, confusing as it is to the layman, does not however suffice to hide the sources of that thought. For almost everything he says can with very little effort be found already expressed, and sometimes as far back as 1922, in the articles of Curtius, Crémieux, Fernandez, Denis Saurat, Paul Desjardins and others among his compatriots.

Proust's debt to Ruskin, his romantic (or pseudo-Bergsonian) conception of time, and the influence exerted upon him by music are questions to the solution of which, though they have long been commonplaces, the present book contributes nothing. But to those whose interest in this great writer is not yet very old or who lack access to French critical periodicals of the last ten years, M. Dandieu's attempt to pigeon-hole Marcel Proust's psychology will seem very ingenious indeed. A combination of infantilism and a sort of lay mysticism explains his confusion of the self with the object and the ultimate sacrifice of the object becomes useless to the artist. Likewise his peculiar fetishism, which plays such an important part in his analysis of love and, in a more subtle form, underlies those famous evocations of significant moments in the past, can be attributed to an oddly primitive side of his mentality. When, as in the episodes of the cup of tea, the hawthornes, or the spoon's striking against the plate, the fetish takes on a concrete value and the past actually becomes the present, we see Proust distorting reality as unconsciously as the child does.

But all of this M. Dandieu might have said with a greater semblance of order and without recourse to an exasperating terminology. Claude Bernard once prophesied that a day would come when the physiologist, the poet and the philosopher would all speak the same language; one might add that when that day comes, the psychologist will still be talking gibberish.

STUDIES IN KEATS *by J. Middleton Murry* (OXFORD. $3.00)

THE six essays collected under this appropriately modest title are intended to supplement Mr. Murry's excellent earlier volume of Keats-interpretation which appeared five years ago as *Keats and Shakespeare*. And this slim book, though it can be of little interest to those not already familiar with more elementary works on the great poet, contributes something to our knowledge of Keats and at the same time does honor to Mr. Murry's scholarship. The first study concerns George Felton Mathew, "an elegant, pure and aerial mind", whose brief and fortuitous friendship with the young poet ended when Leigh Hunt's influence fortunately supplanted Mathew's. The second presents a very satisfactory new interpretation of the sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" by tracing Keats's intellectual preoccupations during the months preceding its composition. With the essay on "The Meaning of Endymion", the critic passes to a consideration of Keats's philosophy, attempting to reconstruct from his poems and correspondence his conception of love, of beauty, and of truth. Mr. Murry has handled this dangerous task most cautiously, with the happy result that he is more often suggestive than dogmatic.

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THE FRENCH NOVEL *by Pierre Mille* (LIPPINCOTT. $2.00)

TO FIND an analogy for Pierre Mille discussing the merits of Flaubert and Proust one would have to conjure up the image of Harold Bell Wright criticizing Meredith and Virginia Woolf. In the roughest possible chronological order he dares to ramble on pronouncing sophomoric judgments of such literary landmarks as *La Princesse de Clèves, Manon Lescaut*, and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, which on any examination paper would deserve the remark: "You have not read the work at all". His contribution to the study of French literature is the discovery that any given style must be either "analytical" or "oratorical" (and to him the Romantic novelists are oratorical!). His criterion in awarding the palm of immortality is whether or not the writer in question has created any living "type" such as Emma Bovary or Tartarin of Tarascon; and consequently Marcel Proust, otherwise quite negligible, is saved by the Baron de Charlus! Gide will live because of Alissa in *Strait Is the Gate*. We are urged to discount Rousseau's and Stendhal's handling of love because they themselves were thwarted in their desire for "conquests"; and without a word of explanation we are told that Henry de Montherlant, that most pagan of Mithra-worshipping toreadors, is a Catholic novelist! Then, as if this were not enough, two out of every three titles are misquoted.

JUSTIN O'BRIEN

CAMERA OBSCURA *by William Bolitho* (SIMON & SCHUSTER. $2.50)

THIS book contains fifty essays, some of which appeared in the New York *World*. It is unnecessary to insist that this collection is eminently worth publishing and eminently worth buying. Bolitho was a brilliant journalist, which in itself assures him a place in literature. He was also very nearly a great critic of life, very nearly a great critic of letters, and—which is most to the point—very nearly a great essayist. As this admirable collection shows, he was interested in everything and everything he wrote is interesting. There was no event, however strange, to which his amazingly various mind could not adjust itself. But he was never wholly absorbed in any one subject; not because, writing three times a week, he had not the leisure to express himself fully—but for precisely the opposite reason: that his was the type of mind which preferred to express itself three times a week.

Reading over these essays one is astonished by the *likeness* (something, I mean, that is neither derived nor imitated) between William Bolitho and Charles Lamb. One is distressed that this likeness should be so fugitive. But Lamb was a genius and a great essayist: Bolitho had that sort of restlessness which is sometimes mistaken for, and sometimes approaches very near to genius; and if one were to compose his epitaph one might say that on June 2, 1930, there died a man in whom a great essayist was constantly on the point of being born.

GEORGE DANGERFIELD

MODERN AMERICAN PAINTERS *by Samuel M. Kootz* (BREWER & WARREN. $5.00)

MR. KOOTZ might be described as a press-agent for a certain school of modern American painting—one sponsored by such dealers as Messrs. Stieglitz and Daniels—did he not so obviously, during the course of his book, prove his youth and, with it, innocence. His love of long words, of fashionable long words, reminds one of Don Marquis's "Little group of serious thinkers" and sometimes of Harlem. He speaks of Futurism and Eclecticism in the same breath, as though they were equally schools or movements in art. He asks for individualism, for subjective expression, and is moved himself only by external evidence of a very definite fash-

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ionable order. He prattles about modern life, machinery, the Puritan inheritance and its need of sensuality, the egoism of the nineteenth-century Romantics and the crying need for intellect in the present-day painting. His logic has an amusing elasticity. He finds that John Marin, the water-colorist, has greater emotional force than A. P. Ryder because he has greater powers "in qualities of thought and painting". He wants men to be simple and derides them mercilessly when they are sweet. He speaks of Peter Blume, born in Russia in 1906, as an "unsurpassed" American artist and illustrates the jacket of his book with Blume's Show Boat. It is probably superfluous to repeat that he is incurably fashionable. To arrive at this conclusion it is not necessary to read the text. Its purport is told very well in the selection of illustrations. These, haphazardly placed on the book's pages, are, with strange exceptions such as Sterne, Karfiol, and Kunyoshi, illustrations of that much repeated thesis that we are living in a machine age. Ship funnels and factory chimneys recur more frequently in these pages than any other symbols of the modern scene. It is regrettable that the writers of books on art are so often without a background. Those who write on modern painting do not know that there was a Renaissance in Italy a long time before little Cézanne stuttered his way into the making of a very ineloquent picture.

THE LIFE AND ART OF DWIGHT WILLIAM TRYON *by Henry C. White* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $7.50)

D. W. TRYON was at the bottom of his soul a Connecticut Yankee. He devoted his winters to painting and his summers to fishing. He died a few days before his seventy-sixth birthday (1925), having made a very comfortable fortune out of painting. His fame has already begun to decline. Mr. White, who writes this biography of him, was a lifelong friend and pupil. He gives us a picture of the man which does very little to revive interest in his now almost forgotten art. He writes of Tryon, at the outset of his very friendly book: "He was half artist, half sailor and fisherman. It sometimes seemed as if the sportsman predominated. . . . Paradoxically you found him most at home when away from home. The land was but a sea-bird's nest for him—merely a lodging for the night". And of his studio at South Dartmouth: "Evidently it was not a going concern. But what a fine storeroom for spare sails, spars, fishing tackle and the family trunks".

Few people now remember the paintings, although there is a room full of them at the Freer Museum, in Washington, and quite a number in the Tryon Gallery, his own bequest to Smith College, where he was for a long time a teacher of drawing and painting. His greatest friend among painters was T. W. Dewing, whose super-refined ladies of the eighteen-nineties find their counterpart in Tryon's landscapes. These were delicate and retiring dawns and twilights in which figures never appeared and in which any kind of accent was taboo. The painter of his time in America felt that any obvious signs of vitality were vulgar. Tryon's painting belongs with a school of artists which, traditionally, in any case, had long fingers, long hair and languorous eyes. It is surprising that the fisherman in him never revolted against the painter. He must have been something of a Jekyll and Hyde. This book on him comes either too early or too late.

GUY PÈNE DU BOIS

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# A VARIED SHELF

CONWAY LETTERS: THE CORRESPONDENCE OF ANNE, VISCOUNTESS CONWAY, HENRY MORE, AND THEIR FRIENDS, 1642-1684, *edited by Marjorie Hope Nicolson* (YALE. $6.00)

THE history of the manuscripts transcribed by Professor Nicolson for this volume is in itself a bit of romance. The Conways in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seem to have preserved every scrap of paper that came into their possession. At the death of the third Viscount (husband of our Lady Anne) the archives at the family seat, Ragley Hall in Warwickshire, passed to his cousin and heir, Popham Seymour, whose nephew was created Earl of Hertford in 1750, and Marquis in 1793. During the absence of one lord and the minority of another, the papers suffered all sorts of depredation under an ignorant steward, some going to feed the fires, others to cover old furniture in the lumber room. From this ignominy a single boxful was rescued by Horace Walpole—"a chest near five feet long, three wide and two deep, brim full" —and this was henceforth cherished by the family until the contents were given by the third Marquis to John Wilson Croker. From him they passed to the British Museum and the Public Record Office, where they now are.

The letters in the present collection, with a few additions from the library of Christ's College, Cambridge, and elsewhere, have furnished Miss Nicolson with material for a work of first-rate importance in the biographical history of the seventeenth century and, to any one prepared to read them in the right spirit, of high literary interest.

The central figure of the correspondence, the heroine of the tale, already known to us from Ward's *Life of Henry More*, Shorthouse's story of *John Inglesant*, and other sources, was certainly one of the most remarkable characters of an age when ladies contrived to be large-minded without forgetting that they were women. With her letters, not a great many, are gathered those addressed to her by her husband, by her brilliant and somewhat erratic brother, Sir John Finch, and by friends of the family, besides a number that passed between these gentlemen themselves. Resounding names occur, such as that of Jeremy Taylor, whose episcopal seat was near the Irish estate of the Conways, so that the reader becomes surprisingly familiar with a closely knit group of relatives and friends embracing about the finest spirits of the age.

The most voluminous of the writers was Doctor Henry More, whose devotion to the Lady Anne proved him a Platonist in love as well as in philosophy, and whose two homes might be said to be in the New Building of Christ's College and at Ragley. Indeed the intimate communion of these two searchers after the truth, with its complete absence of any jarring note of illicit passion, must be accounted one of the rarely beautiful things of English letters. There are many passages bearing on the mystical philosophy of the great Cambridge scholar, not to mention his curious concern with ghostly apparitions and second sight; but in the main the personal tone predominates, so that the somewhat abstract intelligence we have known, and admired, in the precious, rambling biography by Ward, becomes very human and lovable. At times the personal note



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and the metaphysical note are intimately blended together; and then we see the mystical doctor at his best:

"For the thirst after knowledge is ever dangerous till the divine life has its birth in a man, and so the soul becoming divine, God in man as I may so speake examines his works over againe, and tryes if they sute with the will of that divine Nature which is revived in a man. And then all the inquisitions after knowledge are as safe as sweet. For man then does not so much seek himself as God, nor is tickled foolishly with pride and conceit of his knowledge, but is carry'd forth in divine joy and triumph, praysing God in all his workes. And assuredly, Madam! the great confidence I have, that you are in that life, and breath after it more earnestly every day, is that which makes me so willing and promisses me so much happiness in my converse with you".

As for the lady, the extraordinary thing is that one so tortured by almost continuous illness could have had any mind for study. Indeed her ever recurring headaches are the principal topic of the letters to and about her. The iteration, it must be confessed, grows tedious, and would be intolerably dull were it not for the record of strange remedies she employed, with no profit, and for the physicians to whom she applied for help, equally without profit. The latter include such names famous in medicine as William Harvey, discoverer of the circulation of the blood, such miraculous healers as Valentine Greatrakes, the Irish "stroker", and such imposing mystificators as Francis Mercury Van Helmont.

It is fair to say in conclusion that much of the correspondence, save for the halo of antiquity about it, is trivial and uninteresting. The editor could have made a much more popular, but a less valuable book, if she had made it half the present size. Her intermediate chapters of biography and criticism—interludes she calls them—are always entertaining, though a severe taste might take offence here and there at the hyperboles of her language. The annotations are thorough and judicious.

PAUL ELMER MORE

## LIBERTY IN THE MODERN STATE *by Harold J. Laski* (HARPERS. $3.00)

WITH the possible exception of Mr. Laski's *Grammar of Politics*, this latest book is the most illuminating he has written. Its faults lie definitely on the side of the author's pluralism and his apparent blindness to the connection between natural inequality and political expression of the individual personality; its virtues are those of a penetrating intelligence, dissecting modern problems and forever maintaining that eternal vigilance which is the price of liberty.

In his discussion of the nature of liberty or freedom, Mr. Laski states the fundamental issue exactly. Equality is "an attempt to give each man as similar a chance as possible to utilize what powers he may possess". This is as sound a basis for freedom as it is possible to imagine in a modern state. It means in essence equality before the law, and opportunity to use right reason in social and political behavior. And this expression of freedom is obviously something the individual must enjoy in the midst of other individuals and not as an opposing force to what the sociologists call "the social will".

Mr. Laski joins this conception of equality with the guarantees made in the first ten amendments of our Constitution and points out—what cannot be emphasized too much in these days of legalism—that in the United States we have this principle firmly fixed in a political form. Yet he does not overlook the fact that constitutional protections are insufficient to insure these privileges, as one can see in the Eighteenth Amendment.

In his discussion of freedom of the mind and liberty and social power, Mr. Laski indicates certain of the modes of self-expression which make for freedom and discusses

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the human tendency to maintain power by suppression of the minority.

The author is openly on the side of those minorities which attack parties in power, which means that in our and England's government he is a laborite. At the same time that he rightly opposes state control of the internal life of labor unions, he neglects to consider the frequently outrageous control those bodies exert on their own members and the potential control they would exert on political parties were they in a position to do so. Witness the recent attitude of the American Federation of Labor in the President's choice of a secretary of labor.

Mr. Laski has in general too much confidence in the conscience as a guide to right political and social behavior. If we were a nation of Laskis we would enjoy, no doubt, that freedom Mr. Laski writes of. But experience teaches that a man's conscience is a doubtful thing and that sincerity has to be considered as to whether it be of the Lenin or the Socrates variety. Mr. Laski mentions reason as a basis for right action, but he should have made it the basis for that conscience in which he apparently has so much confidence.

Since few men are moved by reason, it is idle to think that the majority can ever be depended on to enjoy or to grant freedom except when the element of force is somewhere present.

Mr. Laski may think that liberty cannot exist except in a democracy, but he fails to indicate that what is meant is a constitutional democracy where the quality of the government will depend on its leadership. Otherwise—and a number of his statements lean in this direction—Mr. Laski is talking about a radical democracy; and that contains no assurance that reason will dictate policies or restrain men's lust for power.

Finally, the wisest observation with which the author closes his treatise is this: "scepticism, it may be, is a dissolvent of enthusiasm; but enthusiasm has always been the enemy of freedom". Obviously, we are to be better sceptics, which is to say, we are to be more rational. And such a condition is reserved for the few, who, it is to be hoped, will be our leaders.

ALAN BURTON CLARKE

ENGLAND UNDER QUEEN ANNE: BLENHEIM *by George Macaulay Trevelyan* (LONGMANS, GREEN. $7.50)

THIS is an historical work which does credit to the older tradition which it represents. It is a statement of facts extending for more than four hundred and fifty pages, so that at the end one is amazed to realize that the span of time which has been covered is brief. It is a direct, unspeculative work in which you find out what happened in a certain period in a certain place, what preceded the event and what was the consequence of it, what issues were involved and what fortunes, who took part and who were effected, and what were the secondary consequences. It is exhaustive, but will be found to be dull or interesting in direct proportion to the reader's interest in the issues of the early eighteenth century in England. This is history with maps, annotations, index, bottom-of-the-page references, marginal notations of dates. When the author describes a campaign or a battle, he describes it in full; there is not half an hour of the course of the battle of Blenheim unaccounted for. It is obvious that Mr. Trevelyan is proud of the glories of the England of Queen Anne, and he is decidedly proud of Marlborough, for whom, if for no one else, his historical pulse beats a little faster. It is the author's intention to follow this volume with a second which will describe the latter years of Queen Anne's reign. The focal point of this book is the battle of Blenheim, but by the time we have reached Blenheim, we know precisely by what route, geographical and political and dynastic, the armies of England, Holland and their mercenaries had reached that little village; we

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know the necessities which involved England in the War of the Spanish Succession, the party and religious differences and divisions that agitated the home scene, the scene on the Continent and the compulsions and accidents that made allies and enemies in the line-up against Louis XIV, the king who so nearly anticipated Napoleon.

In his Preface, Mr. Trevelyan suggests that if his story could have been told by a man of Athens, "it would move like a five-act tragedy from start to finish". If this volume does not so move, let it not detract from its more solid, and less romantic, virtues.

HARRY SALPETER

THE NAVAJO INDIANS *by Mary Roberts Coolidge and Dane Coolidge* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $4.00)

IT IS merely coincidence that this book by Mary Roberts Coolidge and Dane Coolidge arrives on the crest of a wave of popular interest in the Navajo Indians—an interest whose inception, at any rate, may be traced to the success of Oliver La Farge's *Laughing Boy*. There is no suggestion of opportunism in the book itself. It is a conscientious and carefully-planned volume, which has evidently required a great deal of patient research. Most of the material for the book has been gathered from the Indians themselves, with the exception of the historical chapters concerning the relations of the Navajo tribe to the United States government. This was almost necessary, as most of the scientific literature relating to the Navajos is out of date and difficult to obtain.

The Navajos are the most flourishing Indian tribe of North America. In some unexplained manner they have managed to resist the diseases which have decimated other Indian tribes and, in the sixty years that they have lived under the supervision of the United States government, their numbers have increased from 8,000 to an estimated total of more than 45,000, and their wealth has increased proportionately. Not from lack of intelligence or coöperation, but rather because they have been neglected by the government, they have lived largely to themselves, and have maintained intact most of their ancient customs and traditions.

The Coolidges have attempted to include in the scope of this single volume nearly every branch of information, general or scientific, which pertains to the history, traditions, or daily life of the Navajo people. The origins of the tribe are carefully traced, and a very interesting if rather slender, case is made for their Mongolian ancestry. Their history, as it survives in oral tradition, their tribal organization, their family life and customs, their usages with regard to marriage and property, and their social concepts of morality and justice are treated extensively. The greater part of the book, however, is devoted to the religious beliefs and practices of the Navajos, and to the mythology and symbolism underlying them. Complete as it is, this account represents an almost heroic condensation, for, according to the authors, the full religious ritual of the Navajos, with its ceremonial chants, is so long and complicated that one man during his lifetime could not learn a tenth part of it. Moreover, many of the secrets of their medicine men are still carefully guarded from the prying eyes of the white man. For the remarkable insight which they have attained into the mythology and superstition of the Navajo the authors are indebted to two Indians, Long Mustache, a medicine man, and Louis Watchman, their interpreter.

ANDRÉE'S STORY. (VIKING. $5.00)

ON July 11, 1897, Salomon August Andrée, with two companions, Nils Strindberg and Knut Fraenkel, set out in a balloon from Dane Island, Spitsbergen, for an attempted flight to the Pole. Four days later an exhausted pigeon alighted upon the masthead of a Norwegian sealing vessel. It bore in a cylin-

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der under its wing a last message from the daring explorers who had been swallowed by the Arctic ice pack. In 1930, a scientific expedition to Franz Joseph Land accidentally discovered Andrée's last camp on White Island. With the remains of the hardy adventurers were their sledges and equipment and their rolls of photograph film, and, most valuable of all, Andrée's diary, wrapped in senne-grass and an old sweater and still miraculously legible. The great silence of the Arctic was once more broken. The North had given up the key to one of its mysteries.

This volume, prepared under the direction of the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography, has been published simultaneously in twelve countries. It contains brief biographies of the three aeronauts, with an account of Andrée's early experiments and the preparations for the flight. From the diaries and log-books discovered on White Island, the editors have compiled a careful narrative of the flight and the heroic homeward march across the Polar ice pack. There is a full account of the recent discovery on White Island, written by members of the party which made the find. There are signed articles by experts covering various scientific aspects of the ill-fated expedition; and finally, the diaries, letters, and log-books of Andrée and Strindberg are reproduced verbatim. Among the illustrations of the book are twelve photographs taken by the Andrée party, which have been successfully developed after lying for thirty-three years buried in ice.

One cannot praise too highly the manner in which this material has been given to the public. Every care has been taken to make this account as complete and accurate as possible, and to keep it at once scientifically useful and intelligible to the lay reader. Nothing of general interest has been omitted. Only Fraenkel's meteorological journal, and some of Andrée's descriptions of arctic birds and fishes have been reserved for inclusion in a purely scientific work upon the expedition.

LETTERS OF JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY *edited by William Lyon Phelps* (BOBBS-MERRILL. $5.00)

SINCE most of these letters are printed here for the first time, one cannot perhaps accurately determine the plan which Professor Phelps has followed in making his selections. But knowing Riley personally, as Professor Phelps did, and believing, as he must have believed, that Riley was rather greater as a man than as a poet, he has apparently chosen those letters best calculated to display the quality and pith of the man. There appears in this collection a gentle and charming personality, kindly and modest and lovable, and generous to a fault. No one ever had, or deserved, more friends than James Whitcomb Riley. There are letters here to a wide circle of literary acquaintances —to Bill Nye, with whom Riley often travelled on his lecture tours, to Rudyard Kipling, to Joel Chandler Harris, to Mark Twain, Booth Tarkington, Meredith Nicholson, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, and to many others. There are letters to members of his family, and to obscure friends of his boyhood. There are some very moving letters of sympathy and condolence. There are completely charming letters to a child, Dorian Medairy, a niece of the poet Edith M. Thomas, whom he calls "Dory-Ann", and to whom he signs himself, "Yours respectfully, Bud Riley".

Riley was besieged with letters and verses from unknown poets who desired his criticism. He was unsparing of his own time in responding to such requests, dispensing praise freely, and composing long letters of advice dealing with technical problems, and particularly with the use of dialect, of which he was himself a master. He was never a sound critic where personal relationships were involved, and he applied superlatives of praise liberally to such minor poets as Madison Cawein and Edith M. Thomas. He was too kindly and affectionate by nature

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ever to be really harsh, and he was perhaps too sensible of the encouragement he himself had received in his youth from men like Longfellow, who represented to him the peak of poetic success.

With the exception of his delightful letters to children, in which he had no equal, Riley's letters in themselves are not remarkable. He was not at home in the medium of prose, and he had, beyond his friendships and the technical business of writing and marketing verse, extraordinarily few interests. This collection forms a complete and admirable expression of his own personality, but there is little in it which reflects either his own daily life, or the life of his times. A few of the essential biographical facts have been filled in by Professor Phelps, who takes occasion in his introduction to dispose of some of the more flourishing Riley legends —such as the one which maintains that he was born on a farm, and that he was a sign-painter by trade.

MARGARET WALLACE

MEMORIES AND VAGARIES *by Axel Munthe* (DUTTON. $3.00)

BECAUSE of the startling success of Dr. Munthe's autobiography, *The Story of San Michele*, that famous European physician was persuaded by friends to offer again to the public *Memories and Vagaries*, an earlier work of his, long-forgotten and even somewhat obscure at the time of its publication in 1898. Without any sort of revision, this book of essays and episodes comes, modern enough to hold one's interest from beginning to end, and yet with enough of the nineteenth century invading its pages to remind one comfortingly that there was a grandeur that was not Gertrude Stein, a glory that was not Chirico.

Axel Munthe has that quality which, without conscious motivation, allows its possessor to inspire, soothe, and purify. Its results seem to surprise Dr. Munthe as completely as the discovery of his particular style of literature on the bookstands today surprises the gentle reader—who has learned to become a bit too casual in the face of monuments.

With quiet humor, well-behaved metaphor, and an all-holy respect for peace and things stable, *Memories and Vagaries* revives Capri, gloriously free from Philistines and platitudes; Neapolitan chaos and superstition during the cholera scourge; his own adventures while administering medical attention to the poor Italians in Paris near the Jardin des Plantes. Cats, dogs, organ-grinders and crucifixes he treats with equality. Charity, pathos, irony and gratitude pour from the book. And if Dr. Munthe has sometimes permitted himself the rather subtle luxury of poesy, we can forgive him—remembering how infectious the motif of the Mauve Decade became.

Lovers of *The Story of San Michele* will find *Memories and Vagaries* a fitting, though belated, preface to the Munthe autobiography; Capriotes the world over will know that, besides Douglas, Capri has yet another understanding prophet.

PAUL GAUNT

TORTURED CHINA *by Hallet Abend* (WASHBURN. $3.00)

LATE in June, 1929, the New York *Times* was requested by the Nationalist Government of China to recall its correspondent, Mr. Abend because of his "maliciously false" statements regarding conditions in the East. Several weeks later, Mr. Abend was placed completely in charge of the Far East for his newspaper. Those facts and findings which he presented in his cables to New York—and others which did not find their way into print—form the backbone of this volume.

Mr. Abend is intense in his feelings about China; every chapter of his book reveals his bias on questions affecting the Eastern Republic. His statements, however, are convincing, and this despite the fact that they are

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so startling as to support the contention that *Tortured China* will become another *Mother India*. This volume is better written and more intelligently organized than Katherine Mayo's work; it presents a complete and apparently authentic picture of life in China. The reader is confronted by a startling panorama. A country of more than 400,000,000 souls is disintegrating slowly before the petty, yet weakening, onslaughts of rival banditti, rival armies, rival governments. The people of one province starve by the hundreds, while the population of a district one hundred miles away rolls in wealth. Whom robbers do not murder, politico-military factions exploit and destroy. The Nationalist Government from its seat at Nanking attempts to control the country, but lack of passable roads and decentralization of local government render it ineffective. It will not acknowledge its own weakness, preferring to foist upon the world statements of its success in ruling China, even while it attempts to promote propaganda designed to prove to its citizens that conditions in China are not so bad as those in other parts of the world. If we may believe Mr. Abend, and there is no reason to doubt him, conditions are horrifying; pillage, arson, rape, murder, exist where there should be peace, thrift, happiness. Mr. Abend's solution is humane intervention in China by the United Nations of the world, even at the cost of subduing an unwilling patient by force.

IRVING ASTRACHAN

## NEW YORK *by Paul Morand* (HOLT. $2.50)

OBVIOUSLY the author's object—to damn New York and please the ladies—was predetermined in Paris. The French will be quite satisfied with this book, until someone else comes along and proves that Monsieur Morand is all wrong about New York. And if this future exponent writes with the same pretensions to scholarship and the same blandishments of *politesse* and compliment, he will prove his case just as conclusively. Which is but another way of saying that any statement one may make about New York is right, for the Metropolis contains so many facets that some part of the shine of truth is always bound to be reflected, no matter from what angle one may look.

To get his material the author paid four visits to New York, the longest of them lasting two months. Says he: "Each of these expeditions brought sharply before my eyes fresh truths, which, but for the force of contrast, would not have struck me". It is safe to infer that had he continued to make his trips he would have found new things to add to and—who knows?—perhaps modify, his appraisal. For the only thing about New York that has not changed are the references to the city's history which Monsieur Morand found in our Public Library.

LOUIS RICH

## THE UNITED STATES OF EUROPE *by Edouard Herriot* (VIKING. $3.50)

M. HERRIOT has produced by far the most adequate book so far available on the present status of European federation. Most other writers on the subject have given a good deal of space to journalistic prognostications. By contrast, M. Herriot concerns himself very little with balancing likelihoods; his interest is to show the degree to which various forms of federal activity are already being carried on, and to analyze just what types of coördination seem most promising.

Starting with a brief review of the history of the idea of European federation, from the Congregatio Concordiae of George of Podebrad, King of Bohemia in the fifteenth century, to the two documents submitted to the Assembly of the League by M. Briand during the past year, he turns to one after another of the current phases of its outworking, economics, labor, public health, intellectual coöperation, et cetera. He runs

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through the efforts to abolish customs-barriers following on the Economic Conference of 1927 and expresses no surprise at their relative lack of success. Taking down the barriers between various national industries, he argues, is impractical so long as those industries are really national; it is only when an interest has begun to organize on the basis of a larger area that governments can treat it on a continental scale. The various cartels now in existence, on the other hand, indicate a growing tendency towards continentalized production, and offer an appropriate field for intergovernmental agreements. The economic interrelation of various parts of the world, moreover, makes it necessary that the constitution of the European federation be wide enough to leave membership open to England, Russia and Turkey. On the political side, M. Herriot emphasizes the necessity of the United States of Europe's being formed within the framework of the League, and discusses such regional federations as those of the Scandinavian States, the Little Entente, and especially the Pan-American Union, as suggestive in their technique.

The book is complete within itself, but it is accompanied by an able documentation which makes it a valuable reference guide to students who wish to carry their research back to original sources.

H. D. HILL

THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND IN ITALIAN LITERATURE *by Edmund G. Gardner* (DUTTON. $3.75)

MUCH has been written about the Arthurian Legend, and equally much about early Italian literature; but until now no one has had the happy idea of combining the two, like Pickwick's friend who wrote on Chinese metaphysics. Certainly Professor Gardner, the distinguished Dante scholar, is the man best suited to the task. Though his documentation is exact and his knowledge quite complete, he has presented his material, for the most part unfamiliar to all but Romance philologists, in a very accessible form by translating the Old Italian, writing very smoothly, and illustrating his text with charming medieval drawings. Yet bibliographical notes are there for those who want them.

Frequent references to the court of King Arthur and the Tristan story first appear in the pre-Dantesque poets and prose writers of the thirteenth century. Though the Sicilian poets under Frederick II know only the Tristan story which they got from Provence, the later Tuscan poets are more familiar with French sources. The first Arthurian romance in Italian appears towards the end of the century and is followed by almost a score of fourteenth-century romances. Dante's Latin works, and even the *Divina Commedia*, reveal only slight connections with the "matter of Britain", but Professor Gardner agrees with Boccaccio in seeing an Arthurian motive in the famous episode of Paola and Francesca. Boccaccio himself was more deeply influenced; he even devotes a chapter to King Arthur in the Latin prose of his *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*. In the Renaissance Boiardo and after him the great Ariosto built their fame on rimed romances which fuse the Arthurian with the Carolingian cycle. Finally this fascinating account ends with a glance at more modern writers, such as Tasso, Parini, and Leopardi.

JUSTIN O'BRIEN

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# THE BOOKMAN'S MONTHLY SCORE

COMPILED BY FRANK PARKER STOCKBRIDGE, LIFE MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, IN COÖPERATION WITH THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF AMERICA

Twelve years ago this month THE BOOKMAN'S Monthly Score was born. At first the bookish public was doubtful of its value as index of current reading tastes. Its disclosures were so different from those of the bookseller's reports. And, it must be confessed, in the beginning, in January, 1919, the distribution of books among public libraries was not so well organized as it is today, so that one section of the country would be beginning to read a book which another region had finished with. Today the libraries get their books at about the same time, and a book which takes the popular fancy is reported simultaneously from Maine and California. There is no question that our reading habits in 1931 are national, whereas in 1919 they were local. The movies, the magazine serials—more particularly the movies—have done this to us.

## NOVELS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. ANGEL PAVEMENT | *J. B. Priestley* | HARPERS |
| 2. SEED | *Charles G. Norris* | DOUBLEDAY, DORAN |
| 3. TWENTY-FOUR HOURS* | *Louis Bromfield* | STOKES |
| 4. ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT | *Erich Maria Remarque* | LITTLE, BROWN |
| 5. BLOWING CLEAR* | *Joseph C. Lincoln* | APPLETON |
| 6. YEARS OF GRACE | *Margaret Ayer Barnes* | HOUGHTON MIFFLIN |
| 7. WILD WIND | *Temple Bailey* | PENN |
| 8. CIMARRON | *Edna Ferber* | DOUBLEDAY, DORAN |
| 9. THE DEEPENING STREAM* | *Dorothy Canfield* | HARCOURT, BRACE |
| 10. LAUGHING BOY | *Oliver La Farge* | HOUGHTON MIFFLIN |
| 11. MARGARET YORK | *Kathleen Norris* | DOUBLEDAY, DORAN |
| 12. SHEPHERDS IN SACKCLOTH* | *Sheila Kaye-Smith* | HARPERS |

## GENERAL

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|---|---|---|
| 1. THE STORY OF SAN MICHELE | *Axel Munthe* | DUTTON |
| 2. THE GREEN PASTURES | *Marc Connelly* | FARRAR & RINEHART |
| 3. THE ADAMS FAMILY | *James Truslow Adams* | LITTLE, BROWN |
| 4. BYRON | *André Maurois* | APPLETON |
| 5. THE HUMAN MIND | *Karl Menninger* | KNOPF |
| 6. ROOSEVELT | *Owen Wister* | MACMILLAN |
| 7. LONE COWBOY | *Will James* | SCRIBNER'S |
| 8. NEW WORLDS TO CONQUER | *Richard Halliburton* | BOBBS-MERRILL |
| 9. A TREATISE ON THE GODS | *H. L. Mencken* | KNOPF |
| 10. THE MEANING OF CULTURE | *John Cowper Powys* | NORTON |
| 11. THE ART OF THINKING | *Ernest Dimnet* | SIMON & SCHUSTER |
| 12. ASTROLOGY* | *Evangeline Adams* | DODD, MEAD |

*This title has not previously appeared in the Monthly Score



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